

**RESISTING INVISIBILITY: INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S SELF-REPRESENTATION IN
IMAGINED FUTURISMS**

MADLINE ROSE MENDOZA
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MADLINE ROSE MENDOZA

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Dr. Paul McKenzie-Jones Thesis Supervisor	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Sheila McManus Thesis Examination Committee Member	Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Randi Tanglen Thesis Examination Committee Member	Associate Professor	Ph.D.
Dr. Inge Genee Chair, Thesis Examination Committee	Professor	Ph.D.

DEDICATION

To my Mother
and my Grandmother,
my heroes.

ABSTRACT

This project explores Indigenous Futurisms written by Indigenous women from North America in the early 21st century. The stories were analyzed as resistance literature to the historical violence resulting in the literal and literary invisibility of Indigenous women. Each story focuses on an Indigenous woman protagonist, reflecting the subjectivity of the author. The characters define themselves on their own terms and offer positive, transformative, multifaceted self-representations. The intent is for readers, specifically Indigenous women readers, to see these stories as mirrors that reflect empathy, connection, and empowerment.

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I love you.

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INTRODUCTION

“American Indian women struggle on every front for the survival of our children, our people, our self-respect, our value system, and our way of life. The past five hundred years testify to our skill at waging this struggle; for all the varied weapons of extinction pointed at our heads, we endure.”

-Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*

Our lives, as Indigenous women, are threats to colonial rule. We empower the legacy of resiliency despite the impact of colonial violence which aims to erase and render our lives invisible. In the 21st century, Indigenous women in North America still experience the life-threatening consequences of settler-colonialism. We are targets of systemic violence perpetuated through racism, sexism and discrimination. These oppressive structures work as eliminatory methods to aid settler-colonialism as it functions to “destroy to replace” (Wolfe 387- 400). The invisibility of Indigenous women both physically and symbolically maintains settler hegemony and territoriality: “Indigenous bodies, particularly the bodies of 2SQ people, children and *women*, represent the lived alternative to heteronormative constructions of gender, political systems, and rules of descent” (Simpson 5; ch. 7). Indigenous women embody political orders that represent the refusal to replicate capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and whiteness. We not only reproduce, but amplify Indigeneity, so, in the colonizer's eyes, it is our bodies that must disappear, our voices silenced, and our humanity rendered invisible in fear of resistance.

The settler hegemony that exists today is built on the historical disempowerment, erasure, and death of Indigenous women. After contact, Native women were dismantled from their traditional tribal roles as equal figures of authority. For many tribes, the shift from gynocentric-egalitarian¹

¹ A woman-centered social system in which maternal control of household goods and resources, and female deities were and are present and active features of traditional tribal life. Traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not, and they are never patriarchal. Paula Gunn Allen states that gynocentric and egalitarianism are not mutually exclusive; further, that egalitarianism is not possible without gynocentrism at its base.

systems to the enforcement of phallogentric² systems led to the destruction of traditional Indigenous societies (Allen 4; pt. 3). This shift also changed Native men's status to a higher position with the accompaniment of learned patriarchal behaviors, thus aiding in the erasure of the traditionally powerful, social, political, economic, and religious roles women held in their communities. As a result, women's traditional identities were omitted from settler narratives and equally forgotten in tribal communities. Indigenous women were not only invisible to settler society, but we also became invisible within our own nations.

For generations, the dominant cultures in what are known today as the United States and Canada have systematically reinforced the literal and literary annihilation of Indigenous women. The vanishing-Indian ideologies established in popular 19th century literature supports the narrative of dominance and erasure of Indigenous voices. White American and Canadian national memory "is laced through with conquest, added up to either complete domination, with little access to Indian lives and cultures, or a complete freedom to ignore Indian people together" (Deloria 50). The silencing of Indigenous voices leaves the dominant culture to exploit the imageries of Native peoples and define "Indianness" with representations that sanitize settler history.

The popular images of Indigenous women are framed in terms of colonial-heteropatriarchal values and the need to reinforce power relations. The colonial gaze, also known as the "colonizer's mirror"³, perpetuates these images in mainstream literature, cinema, and politics (Deloria 23). They define all Native women under a highly romanticized pan-Indian stereotype: "a plains Indian; the generic Indian. Omnipresent is the 'squaw' who is depicted as a servant,

² A term Allen uses to explain the patriarchal structure imposed by settler colonialism. This system derives from a hetero-male-dominated view that women are the weaker sex in the hierarchy.

³ The settler's imagination reflects a shameful narrative of Indigenous peoples. Using media rhetoric to perpetuate false images through multiple platforms reinforces negative stereotypes that internally affect Indigenous peoples and maintains the dominance in settler narratives.

concubine, beast of burden, drudge, “sinful” and “sultry” (Tohe 12). The colonizer’s mirror is a deliberate elimination method to dehumanize Indigenous women as modern people. It reflects how non-Natives see us and not as we see ourselves: “as helpless victims, fetishized bodies tied to the land for taking, the erotic, but noble 'Indian princess” (Mihesuah 53). Such images repress our authenticity and power so that we cannot claim our own contemporary existence. They are an attack on our visibility and our distinct identities as Indigenous women.

Invisibility is a significant barrier for Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples as a collective. It threatens rightful claims to tribal sovereignty, equity & social justice. The prolonged erasure of Indigenous peoples is due to the lack of representation in K-12 education, mainstream news, and pop culture today (Nagle par. 6). Indigenous experiences and struggles are still written out of history and mainstream outlets, especially, Indigenous activism. This process of erasure further enables the continuation of injustices for Indigenous women.

In the U.S and Canada, currently, upwards of 1,000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and two-spirit people confirms the lack of concern for continued violence on Indigenous bodies (Wells par. 3). Indigenous women are oppressed by men and women- both by non-Native and Native peoples (Mihesuah 53). Native women are 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than any other ethnic group, and 97 percent of those attacks have been perpetrated by a non-Native person (Nagle par. 2). Urban and rural poverty, single parenthood, unemployment, lack of education, poor housing, and equity are at much higher rates for Native women than white women (McNab par. 8). Invisibility not only normalizes violence against Indigenous women but ignores our human rights in settler nations. Therefore, the physical, and cultural survival of Indigenous women depends on the refusal of colonial recognition, and the recovering and reclaiming of both individual and communal Indigenous identities.

Theoretical Statement

The power of voice, the power of story, and the power of representation begin the journey to healing through the unveiling of truths and affirming empowerment amongst Indigenous women. Against the current stance in mainstream culture, Indigenous women are resilient, and most importantly, sacred. Our stories must be told: “women’s stories are medicine. They tell us it is okay to be powerful- it's okay to seek healing... Most of all- they remind you of what you already possess- a light which refuses to die out” (Stonefish 2). The stories written in the 21st century by Indigenous women are acts of resistance to the current state of affairs: “Writing is a way to empower us, to state that we are not victims and that we are attempting to find answers and solve problems” (Mihsuah 22). Indigenous women authors have created a space to confront colonial powers and reject the disempowered status of Native women. More specifically, they have created stories of Indigenous Futurisms. These stories imagine futures that lead to the healing and well-being of our communities; they are acts of resistance and celebrations of survival.

The genre Indigenous Futurisms are stories that imagine present Indigenous futures using science fiction extending to speculative and fantasy sub-genres. They are stories about persistence, adaption, and flourishing in the future (Dillon 10). As cited by Grace Dillon, Gerald Vizenor’s theory of survivance emphasizes a major theme in Indigenous science fiction. Vizenor states “survivance is an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy and victimry” (6). Indigenous Futurisms written by Indigenous women authors adheres to Vizenor’s understanding of survivance, but the survival of women’s voices is also a celebration of a collective sense of life, diversity, and connectedness (Smith 145). The empowerment found in these stories is through the lead characters. Women as lead characters symbolize mirrors reflecting affirmative refusal a

political act against colonial recognition to reclaim visibility on their own terms. They are the embodiments of resurgence to reassert Native women's presence.

These characters benefit Native readers, particularly women readers, to better understand the truths of our presence in the world today, the past, and the future. They represent the journey of *biskaabiiyang*, an Anishinaabemowin word connoting the process of "returning to ourselves" (Dillon 11). The main characters remind us as Indigenous women who we are meant to be, so that the colonial narrative does not determine us. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's theory of "decolonization" and approach to "celebrating survival" further demonstrates that these stories are more than just the struggles Indigenous women endure. It is a lens that focuses on the positives of women's survival and the resistances that affirms our distinct identities as Indigenous women (145). Paula Gunn Allen's theory of "Gynocracy" to reclaim the feminine through the understandings of women-centered Indigenous societies reiterates the reclamation of traditional "tribal belief in the prowess of women" and their role in continuance (4; pt. 3). Similarly, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's theory of "internal (self) recognition" and "affirmative refusal", ignites the process of "imagining, and re-mapping" to promote empathy and empowerment through positive female representation in story.

Indigenous Futurisms written by Indigenous women, like many stories written by Indigenous peoples, give "shape, substance, and purpose to our existence" (Justice 74). Dian Millon's *Felt Theory* states that Indigenous women's stories carry felt knowledges of our experiences. When we speak and write from our lived experiences, we invite others into our worlds. Stories are windows, bridges, and mirrors forming connections and understanding: "positive mirroring creates positive identities" (Simpson 5; ch. 11). Positive mirroring reflects the "strength, pride, connection, beauty, love, fierceness, courage, bravery, and the very best parts of being" a Native

woman (Simpson 1; ch. 6). Therefore, “internal recognition” applies when the female characters are deliberately rejecting internalized effects of systematic racism, colonial violence, heteropatriarchy, and erasure. Instead, they reassert their Indigeneity and female agency, and affirm the worth of their own identity-related differences and their power as women.

From nation to nation, Indigenous women authors are forming connections, relationality, and community through their stories. These stories recover our individual and collective experiences. Devon Mihesuah’s theory of the “common core” of struggle against settler colonialism emphasizes the common context of gender that Indigenous women share. The theory acknowledges the diversity and distinctness of women’s lives but brings together the shared resistance to invisibility in the many ways we find empowerment. As international connections between Indigenous women and peoples, Indigenous Futurisms helps fortify this shared and international resistance.

Terminology

I will recognize and refer to the authors regarding their specific nation. When speaking about or referring to characters in the stories, I will also recognize their affiliation with their specific nation. When speaking about the authors or characters as an international collective when analyzing the stories, I will opt for “Indigenous” or “Native” women.

Literature Review

Indigenous women’s literatures are a diverse collection that shares concerns and perspectives that react to a common pattern of historical, political, and cultural moments within North America. Novels, autobiographies, short stories, dramas and poetry written by Native women since the 19th century are a continued international resistance. These works aim to heal the

traumas of internalized colonialism, racism, and oppression felt by Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous women's literatures as a collective promote the power of voice. This practice of authority and intellectual sovereignty nurtures an inclusive space for Indigenous women authors to affirm their perspective as women with Native experiences. Indigenous women's literatures stem from a tradition of resiliency and perseverance. As its own body of work, it is a community that advocates for the humanity of Indigenous peoples, and the visibility of Indigenous women.

The tradition of resistance in Indigenous women's literatures begins with the first published autobiography in 1883 by Sara Winnemucca (Paiute). Winnemucca's story is an account of the Paiute people's struggles in the face of white invasion on Indigenous lands near the end of the 19th century in present-day Nevada. She retells her community's suffering at the hands of settlers who enforce the separation from their cultural values, social norms, and way of life.

Autobiographies like Winnemucca's are foundational to Indigenous women's literatures: "*Life among the Piutes: Their wrongs and Claims* remind the North American public that Native women bear a strong history of leadership" (Teuton 61). The power in Winnemucca's story is her perspective as a counter-narrative to colonial histories and women's survival that links literature and activism. Her story affirms Indigenous women's traditional roles as equals among their community:

The women know as much as men do, and their advice is often asked. The council-tent is our Congress, and anybody can speak, women and all... And they [women] take some part even in wars. They are always near at hand when fighting is going on, ready to snatch their husbands up and carry them off if wounded or killed... It means something when the women promise their fathers to make their husbands themselves. They not only take care of their children together, but they do everything together... If women could go into your Congress, I think justice would soon be done to the Indians. I can't tell about all Indians; but I

know my own people are kind to everybody that does not do them harm; but they will not be imposed upon, and when people are too bad they rise up and resist them. (Winnemucca 149)

This passage signifies the importance of women's roles in Paiute society. Winnemucca describes women as capable, respected, intellectual- they are vital to their community's survival. The passage is an assertion of Paiute women's presence and the refusal to accept the enforcement of settler gender norms. Her portrayal of women in this passage resists the Western notion of feminine passivity and submission, as well as, the misconceptions of "savage violence" (Deloria 21). She describes a woman who goes into battle to recover her uncle's robe, symbolizing women's active resistance to colonial domination. Winnemucca claims that her community "will not be imposed upon, and when people are too bad they rise up and resist them... There is nothing cruel about our people. They never scalped a human being" (149). She refutes the savage stereotypes already projected onto her community. *Life Among the Paiutes* is an act of resistance that illuminates the powerful identities of Paiute women.

Winnemucca paved the way for Native women's intellectual sovereignty in literature, and Native women's activism for autonomy. Indigenous women's literatures still honor both initiatives in contemporary fiction and non-fiction. Laguna Pueblo literary critic Paula Gunn Allen (Keres) claims that "the traditions of the women have, since time immemorial, been centered on continuance" (2; pt. 4). The tradition of continuance lives on in the writing of women authors that shape Indigenous women's literatures today. Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986) is a collection of essays drawing on feminist literary criticism and her personal experience as a Keres woman. Her study remains a landmark in literary theory and Native American Studies. Her perspective as a Keres woman provides an understanding of Indigenous cultures as inherently gynocentric, and, therefore, she argues that

Native American literature is inherently feminist. The resistance conveyed in *Winnemucca's Life Among the Paiutes* supports Allen's analysis of gynocracy and the rejection of Western patriarchal attitudes to recover female-centric traditions.

Allen's contribution to Indigenous women's literatures revitalized Native women's position in literary discourse during the 20th century. Many more contributors have participated in the continuance of Indigenous women's visibility and uplifting Indigenous women's writing. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Anishinaabe), a 21st century writer reveals parallel arguments to Allen's Native feminist approach. Both Allen and Simpson address the erasures and attacks on Indigenous land, Indigenous relations, Indigenous women bodies, and 2SQ subjectivity. These two authors are central to the theory and arguments regarding women's resistance, resurgence, and visibility.

Although from different nations and generations, Allen and Simpson both base their analysis on the reclamation of the feminine in Indigenous cultures as a decolonial method of rejecting Western patriarchal values and behaviors. Leanne Simpson's Kwe perspective and use of Nishnaabeg intelligence in *As We Have Always Done* seeks to mend the divisions between individual and communal, body and land, story and theory. Her initiative is to encourage political and cultural Indigenous resurgence separate from settler-heteronormative governance. Simpson states that communities must embody "affirmative refusal" and promote "reciprocal recognition" as a collective, with other Indigenous peoples. Thus, she promotes continuance that centers on the resurgence of community, identity, and belonging in the spiritual and physical world.

Indigenous women's literatures reclaim the perspectives of Indigenous women that have been appropriated, dehumanized, and erased completely from settler stories. White Western literature

relays singular stories about marginalized people, especially about the people who were colonized. The “singular story” is an act of power that efficiently mobilizes “inequality, bigotry, and self-interest” (Justice 37). Therefore, women authors are not just offering positive mirroring in stories that refuse the essentialization of Indigenous women’s perspectives and lives but are actively generating community that advocates for the power of voice to protect self-determination, and intellectual sovereignty. Indigenous women’s literature rejects the notion of a singular perspective and promotes the distinct lived experiences of Indigenous women.

An example of Indigenous women’s writing embodying community is present in the 2002 anthology *Sister Nations: Native American Women Writers on Community* co-edited by Heid E. Erdrich (Ojibwe) and Laura Tohe (Navajo). The collection presents contemporary fiction, prose, and poetry, illustrating the diversity of writing by Native women. The anthology includes prominent female Indigenous authors such as Leslie Mormon Silko (Laguna Pueblo), Winona LaDuke (White Earth Ojibwe), LeAnne Howe (Choctaw), Joy Harjo (Muscogee Creek), Susan Deer Cloud (Mohawk/Blackfeet), Lousie Erdrich (Ojibwe), Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Dakotah), and Kateri Akiwenzie-Damn (Anishinaabe). Their works explore both what it means to be a woman with the complexities of the Native American experience.

Sister Nations promotes diversity and representation. The stories within it resist misconceptions reinforced by the dominant culture, especially colonial identity politics. Native women authors challenge the colonial constructs of gender, racial, and class norms. They are constructing meaning as they write about the conditions of their lives because they are speaking their truths. They are generating analysis, perspective, and empowerment, and most importantly, recognition of Native women. Much like Winnemucca’s story, these stories challenge the dominant discourse about authentic Indigenous perspectives.

The Native experience as a woman is wrongfully assumed through the colonial lens, thereby essentializing Indianness.⁴ Works like *Sister Nations* argue against this fallacy using multiple voices to beautifully interconnect the stories that validate the multiplexity of women's identities. Devon Mihesuah's (Choctaw) *Indigenous American Women: Decolonization, Empowerment, Activism* answers to the issue of reclaiming authoritative voice: "there is no one voice among Native women. Rather, there is a spectrum of multi-heritage women in between 'traditional' and 'progressive,' possessing a multitude of opinions about what it means to be a Native female" (7). The stories in *Sister Nations* are a testament to this transformative representation of Indigenous women and how "Native women today look to their past for motivation and strive to empower themselves" (Tohe 20).

Contemporary stories written by Indigenous women encourage a common ground that honors justice, but most importantly upholds the continuation of Indigenous imagination. The most compelling stories are the ones that "bring us back to ourselves" and imagine prosperous Indigenous futures. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* edited by Grace L. Dillion (Anishinaabe) introduces the genre of Indigenous Futurisms, a way to 'renew, recover, and extend First Nations peoples' voices and tradition' using science fiction (2).

The coining of the term Indigenous Futurisms by Grace Dillon reinterprets the White Western understanding of science fiction. The realities of Indigenous peoples and the experiences of Indigenous women are far too often overlooked in Western discourse of futurity. Dillon states that there is no "better terrain than the field of science fiction to 'engage colonial power in the spirit for survival'" (Alfred 7). Elements of Indigenous Futurisms such as Native Slipstream;

⁴ "Indianness" refers to the colonial construction that all Indigenous peoples fit one definition. This generalization undermines authenticity and restrains the freedom to self-identify Indigenous identities.

Contact; Indigenous Literacies and Environmental Sustainability; Native Apocalypse; and Biskaabiiyan, “returning to ourselves” reimagines the relationships with the land, people, and ancestors (Dillon 11). The power to heal and reformulate power relations through science fiction focuses on engaging with Indigenous modernity to find liberation from colonial oppression.

Envisioning Native futures restores Indigenous presence to "enliven our lives and imaginations and consider the complications of historical and contemporary Indigenous experience" (Justice 26). The reimagining portrayed in Indigenous Futurisms give direction to understanding the process of decolonization. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Maori) defines decolonization as: “changing, rather than imitating Euro-western concepts" (10). Narratives that invoke this process of “returning to ourselves”, are inherently resistance literatures. They act as mirrors for personal reflection and how one is affected by colonization, “discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from its impact and recovering ancestral traditions in order to adapt in our post-Native Apocalypse world” (Dillon 11). Engagement with such stories is the key to embracing Indigenous women's powerful legacies and future identities. It is also a opportunity for Indigenous women authors to create a pathway to recovery of self and continuance of “women’s rituals, ceremonies, traditions, customs, attitudes, values, activities, philosophies, ceremonial and social positions, histories- that is, all the oral tradition that is in every sense and on every level the literature of tribes" (Allen 6; pt.4). Reclaiming the value of women in Indigenous nations using science fiction promotes the decolonization of Indigenous hearts and minds.

Indigenous Futurisms participate in the continuance of Native presence, a legacy: “For many of our ancestors, the words they left behind were intended, both explicitly and implicitly, to communicate something of themselves and the world they live into those who would follow” (Justice 118). Indigenous women's stories mirror Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s approach to celebrating

survival, instead of focusing on the demise and cultural assimilation of Indigenous peoples as most White Western literary works do. Celebrating survival accentuates how Indigenous peoples and communities have successfully retained cultural and spiritual values and authenticity (Smith 145). Ultimately, all Indigenous women's literatures are celebrations of survival. Their stories tell of the tragedies and what has been lost. They also tell of heroism and what has been fought for to save and strengthen Indigenous humanity.

There is beauty in Indigenous women's literatures that brings balance and reconnection to the world. In the words of Paula Gunn Allen, "because of imagination, of image, which is the fundamental power of literature, is the power to determine a people's fate" (6; pt. 4). Therefore, the international resistance Indigenous women's literatures brings is the protection of community that guards the past, present, and future ways of being and thriving in Indigenous worlds. The stories written by Indigenous women open the doorway to a standpoint that should not exist in the colonial mind:

We survive war and conquest, we survive colonization, acculturation, assimilation; we survive beating, rape, starvation, mutilation, sterilization, abandonment, neglect, death of our children, our loved ones, destruction of our land, our homes, our past, and our future. We survive, and we do more than just survive. We bond, we care, we fight, we teach, we nurse, we bear, we feed, we earn, we laugh, we love, we hang in there no matter what. (Allen 4; pt. 4)

The ferocity and brilliance that defines Indigenous women's literatures are the resiliency embodied in each voice. They are unapologetically Indigenous, and unapologetically women; the power of their words will remain in the tradition of Indigenous resistance. Together, these authors are a community exuding strength and demanding the visibility of Native women. Their stories are a source of power; they are guides to healing to pass on to the next generation.

Methodology

For this study, I chose to include Indigenous women authors that reside in North America, specifically, the United States, and Canada. Although Mexico, as a part of North America, is also subject to the ongoing effects of settler colonialism, Indigenous Futurisms explores the stories of Native women experiencing the traumas of Anglo-settler colonialism across the United States and Canada. Therefore, I did not include Indigenous Hispanic/Latinx authors in this study.

Indigenous male authors were also excluded from this study. This project focuses solely on the stories written by North American Indigenous women – “they are the ones who can best describe what it means to be Indigenous women, they are those who live it” (29 Mihesuah). The authors are of distinct cultural backgrounds and vary in their social values, religious beliefs, political and personal positions, appearances, gender roles, and sexual orientation.

This study will analyze five novels and four short stories written by North American Indigenous women authors of the early 21st century. The chosen stories are from collections within the genre of Indigenous Futurisms: *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson (2004); *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* by Grace L. Dillon (2012); *Celia's Song* by Lee Maracle (2014); *Mitewacimowina: Indigenous Science Fiction and Speculative Storytelling* by Neal Mcleoad (2016); *Love Beyond Body, Space, and Time: An LGBT and two-spirit Sci-Fi Anthology* by Hope Nicholson (2016); *Future Home of the Living God: A Novel* by Louise Edrich (2017); and *Trail of Lightning* by Rebecca Roanhorse (2018).

The stories will be analyzed as resistance literature revealing the rejection of colonial violence, and negative stereotypes of Native women perpetuated in the mainstream culture. Each story focuses on an Indigenous woman protagonist, helping the authors to re-define what it means to be an Indigenous woman today. Each defy colonial dominance in its various forms by actively

reclaiming self-ownership, women's agency and represent Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. They define themselves on their own terms and therefore offer positive, transformative, multifaceted representations of Indigenous women. The intent is for readers, specifically Indigenous women readers, to see these stories as mirrors that reflect empathy, connection, and empowerment.

My analysis will rely on several Indigenous Feminisms working in tandem with Indigenous Literary and Critical Theory. There is no single voice among Native women because the culturally and racially monolithic Native woman does not exist (Mihesuah 7). The women protagonists remind readers there is no single image, definition, or identity that encapsulates the multiple realities, and truths of a contemporary Indigenous woman. However, "Native women share the common context of gender and the 'common core' of struggle against colonialism" (Mihesuah 58). Using Indigenous feminisms allows for a decolonial process in how the authors reconstruct power relations that honors traditional female roles. These theories will emphasize the diversity of realities of each woman portrayed in the story while critiquing the continued violence directed at Native women through colonial structures. It is vital to understand the intersectionality of present-day influences that shape the experiences of Native women's lives and the parallels to the trials and tribulations the protagonists face. The "commonality of difference" that we share as women with Native experiences in these stories reveals us as present, and more importantly as human.

Each story in this study is an act of resistance operating in the context of an artistic collective. Leanne Simpson and Jarret Martineau propose "creative combat" as a term that "embodies Indigenous values of individuated creation and collaborative, an interdependent communality" (Martineau 4). Thus, the women authors of these stories work as "self-generators instantiating

micro-communal forms of relationality and creation” (Simpson 4; chp. 12). Simpson and Martineau's idea of “creative combat” originates from Nishnaabeg intelligence using constellations as conceptual doorways, maps, that return “us to grounded normativity”; nationhood, Indigeneity, and freedom (Simpson 14; chp.12). As a fugitive theoretical intervention in the world of settler colonialism, the concept of constellations reveals the chosen stories not as individual works standing alone, but as links to one another creating a space. They nurture a space that leads to inclusion and regeneration — a coresistance; a “trajectory into freedom” (Martineau 5). These stories remind us, as Indigenous women, who we are meant to be.

As a reader and writer, my perspective as a mixed-blood Pueblo (Laguna/Ohkay Owingeh)- New Mexican woman is mine only. My experience is a part of my reading method. The way I interpret the readings intersects with my personal experience living as a Native woman in the 21st century. I do not speak for all Indigenous women, I only speak for myself, but I hope to highlight how we can find unity and empowerment in representation through story.

Chapter One: Reclaiming Power and Identity

The selected stories for this chapter include “Transitions” by Gwen Benaway; *The Home of the Living God* by Louise Erdrich; and *Trail of Lightning* by Rebecca Roanhorse. This chapter explores how Indigenous Futurisms affirm Leanne Simpson’s theories of Affirmative Refusal, Paula Gunn Allen’s theory of Gynocracy and Linda Smith’s understanding of decolonization.

The stories in this chapter support the transformative, and distinct ways Indigenous women claim their identities against invisibility. Each story line relays gynocentric underpinnings that nurtures this freedom to discover and assert their voice. This practice exhibits the recovery of power and

visibility of female presence. Affirmative refusal is present in each story in varying degrees, especially on a personal level for specific characters. They symbolize Indigenous women's attempts to dismantle colonial ideologies, specifically, how each character reframes colonial gender roles and identity categories. They exemplify self-determination and refusal to colonial recognition through valiant representations of Indigenous women as heroes. They advocate for the inherent rights of Indigenous women.

Chapter Two: Honoring Differences and Belonging

The second chapter will focus on the following stories: "Refugees" by Celu Amberstone; "Nè Le!" by Darcie Little Badger; and *The Girl Who Grew a Galaxy* by Cherie Dimaline. Dian Million's Felt Theory, Leanne Simpson's theory of internal (self) recognition and Devon Mihesuah's "commonality in differences" will aid in analyzing the complexities of each character. More specifically, their resistance to invisibility, a common struggle, reflected in their felt experiences. They combat the conditions of systemic violence and internalized colonialism through blood memories, a powerful act of resistance and self empowerment.

The stories in this chapter broaden the understanding of each personal journey against the oppressive conditions Indigenous women endure in our own realities. These stories are bridges into one's felt experience as a way to pass on the emotional knowledge. They acknowledge the impact of settler colonialism but focuses on the resilience of Indigenous women despite our adversities. The authors inform these characters and provides introspection that reminds readers of the power of voice and speaking one's truth; the personal is also political.

Chapter Three: Resurgence and Healing

This chapter will analyze the following stories: “The Eaters” by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson and *Celia’s Song* Lee Maracle. Each of these stories uphold Linda Smith’s approach to celebrating survival, the process of “Returning to Ourselves” and Leanne Simpson’s theory of Resurgence.

“Returning to ourselves” is the core act of resistance in these stories. Each character finds liberation in their fight for survival. Against the reoccurring odds, Indigenous women are still here; we are living proof of many generations of survival. The celebration of our existence also defines who we are today. The journeys endured in these stories complements the resiliency of Indigenous women and their participation in cultural continuance as it brings meaning to our present and gives us courage to define a better future.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the thesis will summarize how Indigenous Futurisms offer authentic and positive representations of Indigenous women. The stories are acts of resistance to colonial assumptions and misrepresentations that render Indigenous women invisible. More importantly, these voices are speaking to readers that can see themselves in these stories. The empowerment of self-recognition in story for me, as an Indigenous woman, is to feel connected. Indigenous Futurisms are the windows to connection, visibility, and empowerment.

CHAPTER 1: Reclaiming Power and Identity

“It is a beautiful, powerful, all-knowing sound. It is a wordless melody that only women sing. We sing a hymn of war and a march of peace.”

- Louise Erdrich, *Future Home of the Living God*

In the colonial consciousness, the image of Indigenous women is a highly romanticized and abused Other: "The two most prevalent images of Native women- the princess and the squaw drudge- still affect Native women's self-esteem" (Miheuah 102). Both stereotypes emphasize the theme of colonial violence against Indigenous women to fulfill colonial fantasies of power. The image of Indigenous women as inferior began with settler and Indigenous contact and continues to perpetuate the dehumanizing ideologies using two contradictory and gendered storylines (Deloria 31). In one set of narratives, Indigenous women were and are still seen as the symbolic conquering of the land itself, and therefore establishing an engendering and "peaceful" narrative of colonization. Another set of narratives relied on masculinist imagery of violent "Indian conflict" (Deloria 20). Nevertheless, the two story lines equate to the legitimacy of 'Indianness' according to the colonial imagination or, as Daniel Heath Justice suggests, many stories conforming to one single story, "Indigenous Deficiency". The external force positions Indigenous peoples in a state of constant lack: "in morals, law, culture, restraint, language, ambition, hygiene, desire, love"—they are broken (Justice 2). Therefore, the expectations attached to the image of Indigenous peoples fuels colonial recognition⁵ as a form of erasure to

⁵ Glen Coulthard's discussion of recognition in *Red Skin, White Mask* argues that Indigenous peoples must refuse recognition from settler colonial states as a form of validation. Colonial recognition confines the truths of the political and cultural lives of Indigenous peoples. Therefore, refusal of colonial recognition mobilizes Indigenous intelligence outside the confines of Western thought and dismantles the systems of colonial domination.

“represses authenticity”⁶ and more specifically, maintains the invisibility of Indigenous women’s identities.

For Indigenous women, the symbolic violence in these images influences the ongoing physical violence felt by many today. The stories in this chapter re-center Indigenous women's presence in the contemporary era to reframe colonial gender roles and identity categories that have historically repressed our authenticity and power. The female characters in these stories exemplify self-determination and refusal of colonial recognition of 'Native' and 'woman,' they redefine their identities on their own terms, an act of decolonization aimed at the consciousness of readers in an effort to disrupt settler ideologies. The act of reclaiming Indigenous women’s voices within these stories affirms Leanne Simpson's theory of Affirmative Refusal, Linda Smith's theory of Decolonization, and Paula Gunn Allen's reclaiming of the feminine theory of Gynocracy. “Transitions” (2016), *Future Home of the Living God* (2017), and *Trail of Lightning* (2018), challenge the colonial imagination with characters that offer self-representation; thus, mirroring the transformative ways Indigenous women reclaim their power in their distinct identities.

Gwen Benaway's (Anishinaabe/Metis) short story *Transitions* from *Love Beyond Space and Time* conveys the story of an Anishinaabe-Metis trans woman. Her first-person perspective communicates her feelings about the everyday microaggressions she encounters regarding her appearance. The worry of looking feminine is a reoccurring subject for the character, which further explains her willingness to undergo a trial for new hormone therapy to accelerate her transition. During her participation in the trial, she encounters an Anishinaabe Elder in her

⁶ The style of romantic stereotyping and a feature of settler-colonial discourse to eliminates large numbers of empirical natives from official reckonings and, as such, is often concomitant with genocidal practice (Wolfe 16)

workplace. The woman Elder reintroduces the power of women's traditional roles through Anishinaabemowin. The Elder and trial bring the world of ceremony and Western science side by side. It is up to the main character, who remains nameless, to define the meaning of woman while navigating the modern world.

In Benaway's story, her character challenges Western expectations of what is it to be a 'woman'. The main character's experience with fitting into the dominant culture focuses on Western social standards and medicine to validate her existence as a woman: "Half of transitioning from a man to a woman is learning to blend. The other half is hair removal" (77). Western societal norms reiterate the petite, fragile, soft, physicality that defines the image of 'woman'. The main character believes in order to achieve a more feminine identity she must get rid of the masculine characteristics, especially if they threaten her life.

She hints of the physical violence many Indigenous trans women endure: "At the end of the day, it is makeup and lasers which help you pass as a woman. It makes you safer in public if no one can tell" (78). While in public, she points out several times she is under judgment. She points to her "half-breed skin tone," and that she can "feel" the glances from onlookers, and their assumptions on her being "an obvious transwoman... I know the look" (78). The many levels of judgment impede on her identity not only as a woman but as an Indigenous woman. The targeting of Indigenous bodies, self-determination, gender, sexuality, and relationships continues to be an assimilation weapon of control and disposes of Indigenous living and being.

Unveiling the microaggressions and simultaneously blatant racism and transphobia in this story highlights the social eradication methods to dehumanize Indigenous trans women in the dominant society. The main character negatively comments on the "science" and "expectations" of Western society but believes she must seek colonial recognition to feel closer to herself and

yet "farther away from the world, and it's pervasive expectations" (80). She is caught in a bind with seeking validation from the colonial gaze and expectation to justify her right to live as a woman. Benaway is arguing that colonial expectations about sex and gender force trans women to sacrifice their humanity to prove their authenticity as woman.

Benaway's main character's reclamation of self is relearned through reconnection and, thus, participates in the recovery of Indigenous political systems that empower women and renew equality between women, men, Two-Spirit, and children's roles. An encounter with an Elder's teaching reintroduces the traditional gender roles within the cultural practices of the Anishinaabe nation. The character comments on how her co-workers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, receive the teaching in the workplace. The variation of responses between co-workers, prompts her to reflect on her position as an Anishinaabe and Metis woman:

We were not raised with the culture and language. Bushcraft was part of my grandparent's lives, but they weren't on reserve and didn't practice culture. The most obvious sign of their heritage was the stereotypical Indian crap around their dilapidated farmhouse. There were dream catchers in the windows, little creepy Indian maiden ceramic statues, and a mantel clock with famous 'lone brave' artwork painted on the face. That was their contribution to keeping tradition alive (Benaway 81).

Her observation made about her family re-emphasizes the power of stereotypes. The stereotypical definitions of 'Indianness' absorbed by her family as a result of disconnection from tradition and culture emphasizes the methods of invisibly, inflicting dispossession on Indigenous bodies and minds. Once again, the enforcement of colonial recognition is a historical constraint on defining her personal identity with her heritage. The confinement in the expectations of "authenticity" impedes freedom of self-determination and invalidates the existence or claim to Indigeneity without adhering to the colonial policies that regulate Native identity.

During the Elder's teachings, the character notices that the Elder looks over at her "whenever she speaks about female roles" and smiles at her in a wide "Anishinaabe smile". She comments on how comforting it is "to know there are still traditional people who know the place of Two-Spirit people" (81). The recognition from the Elder ignites a spiritual reclamation of self. After the session, she notices women singing traditional drum songs that no one else can hear. She also witnesses an apparition of a woman in a jingle dress at an intersection in the city covering an old burial ground.

The process of affirmative refusal manifests from the spiritual world and intersects with her current reality. The character believes she is hallucinating from the pills from the hormone therapy trial when she hears the songs and witnesses the apparition, but it is her soul reconnecting with the ancestors — leading her to her true self as an Anishinaabe Kwe. The double life she refers to early on is no longer a fragmented sense of being. Her navigation of worlds colliding in the present reasserts balance to the separation she once felt between body and spirit.

I know what you are. What do they call it now, a transition? We had our own ceremonies for becoming a woman. There was a way we went about bringing you into the world as woman. Not all the drugs and surgeries they use now. Being a woman isn't about your body. It's about your spirit. You need ceremony to help with that, not pills (Benaway 84).

Initially resistant to accepting the knowledge the Elder bestows upon her, she relays insecurities of not being "traditional" enough. Even when hinting to the Elder her inadequacy, the Elder still honors her connection and validates her as Kwe. With persistence, she finds herself trusting in the words of the Elder and accepting the voices calling to her to reclaim her inherent power as an Indigenous woman.

The main character's transition to womanhood reflects a decolonial process of self by embodying affirmative refusal to colonial confinements that render Indigenous trans women identities invisible. She reclaims her power as an Indigenous woman through Indigenous recognition and redefines 'woman' through an Indigenous perspective. Benaway argues that women have the inherent right to live on their own terms, to defy power, to speak back to erasure and violence. It is an inherent right to self-sovereignty and the ways in which Indigenous women assert their identities as a practice of choice without colonial recognition. The character's story reflects the profound strains and ambiguities in the daily existence of Indigenous trans women and thus contributes to womanhood broadly and the visibility of Indigenous trans women voices.

The Future Home of The Living God by Louise Erdrich (Ojibwe) also answers to the complexity of Indigenous women's identity and the power of matriarchal lineage. The heroine, Cedar Hawk Songmaker, a young pregnant Ojibwe woman from Minneapolis, narrates the story through a written journal that she plans to give to her unborn child. She explains that a biological apocalypse is underway involving the reversal of evolution and that authorities believe there is a threat to humanity as there are difficulties in human reproduction. Cedar was adopted at birth by Glen and Sera Songmaker, two white liberals. Upon her discovery of her pregnancy, she decides to meet her birth mother, Sweetie, from the Ojibwe reservation. Her story is of the relationships between mothers and their babies, humans, and Earth, and survival.

Erdrich conveys a story that intertwines several moments of affirmative refusal. Cedar embodies such acts as she writes of her experiences to her unborn baby. Cedar first introduces herself by her "white name", Cedar Hawk, and explains that the journal will serve as an account of "historic times" (3). As the story quickens, her writing becomes more of a personal narrative for her child

to know who she is. Her past unfolds as she recalls navigating her inner conflict with the American identity and her newly discovered Ojibwe heritage:

I denied the knowledge of my biological family for a short time... my ethnicity was celebrated in the sheltered enclave of my adoptive Songmaker family. Native girl! Indian Princess! Ojibwe, Chippewa, Anishinaabe, but whatever. I was rare, maybe part wild, I was the star of grade school. Sera kept my hair in braids, though I famously chopped one off. But even one-braided, even as a theoretical Native, really, I always felt special, like royalty... Once I went to college and hung out with other indigenes. I became ordinary, then. Even worse, I had no clan, no culture, no language, no relatives. Confusingly, no struggle. I chopped off both of my braids, stopped going to classes. I'd been a snowflake. Without my specialness, I melted. (Erdrich 4-5).

Cedar's internal conflict with her heritage conveys the feeling of alienation and a sense of homelessness. Growing up without the connections to her Ojibwe family and nation, at a young age she settles for the stereotypical framing of what constitutes as a Native person, the exoticized Other. In this passage, Cedar implies that Sera is encouraging the mythical image of 'Indianness' to tokenize her. In retaliation, Cedar cuts one of her braids to signify the rejection of repressed authenticity. Once she encounters "real" Indigenes in college, which implies her feelings of inadequacy about claiming Ojibwe identity, she cuts her braids off completely. Erdrich is addressing a familiar theme of acceptance and standards constructed by colonial society. She is refuting colonial standards because of the infiltration of legitimacy that becomes a form of policing not just within mainstream society but also in Indigenous communities. The ideologies of the dominant culture are tactics to continually repress authenticity to control colonial spatialities such as urban and reserve leading to negative understandings of labels such as 'progressive' and 'traditional'.

Cedar's invisibility and feeling of placelessness in both the dominant culture and her Ojibwe culture creates a division in her world, but her identity of self reframes the colonial assumptions of 'Native' and 'women', especially, as this story emphasizes the unexpected ways in which she seeks empowerment. She explains, "For here I am, maybe a walking contradiction, maybe two species in one body. I am also an insecure Ojibwe, a fledging Catholic, an over striving brain cooking up conflicting dramas" (66). In her complex and even contradictory identity of self, Cedar reasserts freedom to find self-acceptance and self-love, especially, in her new relations among her Ojibwe family. Meeting her Ojibwe family, she finds that her mother, Sweetie, her stepsister, and Grandmother are all named Mary Potts. She learns she is part of a matrilineal line of many Marys. In this rediscovery, there is acceptance from her biological family, regardless of the differences between them. The rebuilding of familial relations helps her reassert her power in her heritage, balance in herself, where she comes from, and her place in the world — the refusal of colonial recognition through reconnection, a decolonial process of dismantling the feeling of shame.

While finding safety with her family, she is given a new tribal ID: "I look happy in my picture... that's me... Mary Potts" (238). Erdrich is writing back to colonial policies of legitimization. For Cedar, reclaiming her identity through membership is an act of protection from the government. As her stepfather states: "We are not giving up our pregnant tribal members. Our women are sacred to us" (227). Erdrich is using membership as a weapon of protection against the state government in order to strengthen Indigenous nationhood and women's sovereignty as opposed to its initial use of eradication.

On a personal level, Cedar is happy about the membership card, and although it is for her protection, it also symbolizes her journey in recovering her roots. Her renaming of Mary Potts,

her birth name, ties her to the matrifocal lineage of women. She is the continuation of her ancestors: "Woman has had a traditional role as Centre, maintaining the fire—the fire which is at the center of our beliefs. She is the keeper of culture" (Hoy 23). Cedar simultaneously weaves between the labels progressive and traditional in the sense that she is a product of the mainstream society, but also adheres to the traditional sense of woman in that she is the center; the transmitter of knowledge. Her storytelling is an act of continuation and simultaneously embodies the distinct role of woman as giver, as teacher, transmitter, voice and leader (23-24); therefore, muddling the ideas of progressive and tradition when amplifying the transformative identity of claiming Indigeneity.

Cedar is navigating several aspects of her world: her upbringing by white liberal parents, her Ojibwe family she soon comes to know, and the United States turned theocracy hunting down pregnant women and forcing 'female gravid detention' by the Unborn Protection Society (93). Erdrich uses several religious themes in the story to highlight Cedar's journey of self-determination that links the divisions in her world. Once again, she attacks the manifestations of colonialism in policies as well as religion. At the beginning of the story, when negotiating her identity, Cedar chooses to become Catholic to find a sense of belonging and even writes for a magazine where she explores the subject of the immaculate conception. Concurrently, the government takeover uses fundamentalist religious politics to build and enforce the Church of the New Constitution. The Church of the New Constitution expands the Patriot Act that requires all pregnant women to report to birthing centers for surveillance and, if to resist, will be sought out and detained by authorities. Erdrich challenges the patriarchal ideologies rooted within the fundamentalist's plan of conquest over mainstream culture and government.

The history of the church and its oppressive behavior derives from colonial methods of assimilation, especially, in the history of many Indigenous peoples. In the story, women's rights are void, making them property to the government and rendering them inferior to their male counterparts. The fundamentalist view on societal order through religious control reflects the oppression and infiltration of European religion on Indigenous nations. Cedar represents Indigenous women and their bodies as objects of manifest destiny: "The state had a strong interest in assimilating Indigenous bodies into gendered roles of European females and males, and fusing Indigenous families with hierarchy of heteropatriarchy" (Simpson 15). As a result, the confinement of women to the domestic sphere of the home, and further maintains the criminalization of Indigenous women and queer people on urban, rural, and "reserve" spaces (18). The lack of consent and the emphasis of the conquest of Indigenous women adheres to the colonial narrative of domination and perpetuates the invisibility of Indigenous women's inherent rights. Erdrich is reiterating the violence on Indigenous bodies since the first invasion and critiquing the ongoing power imbalance that is strategically racialized and gendered and equally pervasive in the contemporary settler states.

As a Catholic, Cedar worships Mary and Saint Kateri Tekkawetha (of the Mohawk nation). When she reconnects with her biological mother, she learns that Sweetie also worships Saint Kateri, and this is the first commonality that bridges their relationship. The two holy women represent women of struggle, and this appeals to Cedar while pregnant and living against diversity and life-threatening circumstances. Similarly, Cedar represents the struggle of survival to readers and parallels the enduring experiences that many Indigenous women encounter as subjected Other in contemporary issues.

The recognition of Mary and Cedar's own positions as pregnant women planning to give birth to an "original" baby on December 25th, signifies the role Cedar plays in continuing humanity, but also the rise of Indigenous nationhood. The similarities between Mary and Cedar (or Mary Potts) revise the story of humanity and re-centers Indigenous women's power in continuation. *The Future Home of the Living God* is not the expected fundamentalist view of the all-powerful Messiah that re-establishes the patriarchal hierarchy but is a retelling of many Indigenous women's histories in their legacy of survival and perseverance to renew Indigenous humanity. A conversation between Cedar and her stepfather illuminates the fact that Indigenous peoples continue in the face of destruction because they have already endured "the apocalypse".

"Indians have been adapting since before 1492 so I guess we' keep adapting.'

'But the world is going to pieces.'

'It's always going to pieces.'

'This is different.'

'It is always different. We'll adapt" (Erdrich 127).

Cedar is an example of adaptation, not assimilation, and although the way she identifies seems inconsistent, her story contributes to a broader, more complex understanding of Indigeneity: "urban mixed-blood Native people are not extraneous to Indigenous communities" as Bonita Lawrence states. Much like the character in "Transitions", Cedar is navigating several worlds in her reality. Both characters tell another side of the history of colonialism; people that experience removal, dispersal, and have been bled off from Native communities as a result of colonial policies.

Reclaiming identity, for Cedar and the “Transitions” character, is both their reconnections with their Indigenous heritages and their fight for women’s autonomy. Their adaptation to survive within colonial society represents the mobility of resistance against invisibility and counters colonial dominance. They exude pride in embracing their true selves and reclaiming their power as Indigenous women despite the forces of modernity.

Participating in this process of re-establishing presence, *Trail of Lightning* by Rebecca Roanhorse (Ohkay-Owingeh Pueblo) is about a Diné monster-slayer, Maggie Hoskie. Her story also redefines the representations of Indigenous women, especially when physical violence is associated with rendering women as victims. Dinétah, formerly the Navajo reservation, has been reborn after the Big Water drowned the world during a climate apocalypse. The rise of Dinétah has revitalized the stories of the gods and heroes of Diné legend. They now walk the land in what is known as the Sixth World. Maggie is an emotionally isolated character with a hard exterior and loves to kill. Her backstory is of heartbreak, loss, abuse, mistrust, and abandonment. With her keen sense of cultural identity, although she is not much for “tradition”, Maggie reasserts the matrifocal role of woman as she defies the constraints of patriarchal attitudes and colonial expectations that live within the walls of Dinétah (3).

As a young child, she witnesses the brutal murder of her grandmother by Diné monsters. Through this traumatic event, Maggie enables her clan powers, the speed of Honágháahnii (“one walks around”), and the killing prowess of K’aahanáanii (“living arrow”). The god, Neizghání finds Maggie after her grandmother’s death and takes her in as his own. Neizghání becomes her mentor and lover but ultimately leaves her because he believes she is tainted with evil, a monster. Maggie is in isolation after Neizghání leaves her, and soon after, she is hired to rescue a young girl kidnapped from a nearby village. She discovers there is a new type of monster being created

in Dinéah. It becomes clear, although her people have ostracized her for her overly violent powers, she is the only one that can save them. Maggie accepts the help of Kai Arviso, a medicine man, to find the creator of the new monsters. Maggie is not a victim but a survivor and exemplifies the reclamation of identity, reconstructions of power relations, and undoing the damage of internalized pain.

The matrix of relations that defines settler-colonial states such as Canada and the United States is racial and gender violence, and thus allows for multiple oppressions to condone the suffering of Indigenous women. *Trail of Lighting* unveils contemporary issues such as MMIW, police brutality, toxic masculinity, domestic abuse, and emotional and physical assault against Native women. Maggie experiences several of these issues done by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents of Dinéah. The critique on community life and outside forces leads the reader into Maggie's mind and her recovery of self-authority and individual sovereignty.

The manifestation of gender violence systematically targeted at Indigenous women through the reinforcement of stereotypical labels of 'woman' and 'native' contribute to the ongoing physical violence experienced by many Indigenous women. The levels of symbolic erasure and physical elimination feed from one another to create a totalizing control of power. Although the rates of abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault are much higher for Indigenous women, it is the rhetoric of victimization that detrimentally renders our humanity invisible. Labeling women only as victims reattaches the colonial imagery of the certain feminine passivity and helplessness. Maggie reflects this struggle, but Roanhorse rewrites the victim as a heroine.

Initially, much of Maggie's dialogue is an expression of self-hatred: "Trauma, scars. That's what I know, what I am good at" (125). She repeatedly comments on the reactions she gets from others: "Once they understand what I am, they want nothing to do with me" (78). It is an internal

struggle for her to find positive meaning in her clan powers and who she is as a Diné woman: “I can’t say what awakened my clan powers in that moment... That showed me just how terrible I could be” (109). She describes herself as a weapon, and multiple times she states that she is not a hero. Even when her sidekick Kai believes that clan powers are a blessing and that she is more than the trauma she has endured:

“Who convinced you that all you are is a killer? That your past makes you some kind of monster? Did he [Neizghání] tell you that you were poisoned, some kind of natural-born killer? Did he convince you that you couldn’t have friends? Couldn’t be loved?”

What do I say? It’s the only life I know? Killing is the only thing that makes me worth anything to Neizghání? And Neizghání was the only thing I had that makes me worth anything?

“You don’t know the things that I have been through. Or the things that I’ve done.”

Kai says. ‘Everything you’ve done, your past, it’s all just a story you tell yourself. Some of it’s true, but some of its lies.’

‘You think I’m lying?’

‘Only to yourself.’” (Roanhorse 235)

Maggie is a fearless character that battles inner turmoil and feelings of being an outsider in her community. In the public eye, her deathly powers and reputation ties her to the legendary Diné hero. Beneath her hard exterior, she is ashamed of her gift. Her sense of worth relies on her former mentor as the only form of validation of her existence. Roanhorse uses introspection on Maggie’s actions and powers to play on the misogynistic view of women. Maggie and Neizghání’s relationship unveil the psychological abuse of domestic violence. Her lack of pride in her strength and her inability to claim space using her voice conveys the destructive hyper-masculinity that renders women’s presence, value, and power invisible.

Roanhorse further challenges the roles of feminine and masculine by playing on a reversal of expectations in order to reclaim women's presence and balance of power. Kai's character is the opposite of Maggie and serves as a balance of calm and passivity versus Maggie's violence and edge. This reversal of colonial gender expressions mimics the traditional components that can make up the roles of female as leader and fighter, and roles of male as giver and caretaker. The role Kai plays is integral to challenging the toxicity of Maggie's thoughts about herself and reiterates that her clan powers are a blessing. His most potent argument that strikes Maggie the most is when he tells her she is only lying to herself. She does have the power to claim space for herself, and that who she is offers a positive representation of power. Embodying the voice of change, Maggie, Cedar, and the character in "Transitions" mirror the rejection of colonial performativity.

Maggie comes to face Neizghání, set up by the trickster, Coyote. She faces her ex-mentor in a battle arena and loses almost dying from being impaled by a lightning sword which then brands her as his property. Once again, Roanhorse reinforces the metaphorical and physical framing of Indigenous women as objects of conquest and ownership. It is not till after Kai physically heals her that she realizes she is nothing like the God hero and must rid herself of him completely. In her final battle with Neizghání, she not only confronts the manipulation rooted in their relationship but also with Kai, whom she discovers has the clan power of manipulation.

Moreover, Coyote has played her in his own game to end a personal conflict with Neizghání. Maggie has seemed to be a pawn in each of these male character's self-fulfillment. From this realization, Maggie's reclamation of agency comes with bloodshed, and she eliminates Coyote, Kai, and Neizghání. This deliberate action reasserts her autonomy and their deaths represent Maggie putting an end to the lateral and physical trauma that has held her back from reclaiming

her power as a woman. Coyote represents the loss of her childhood, Neizghání represents ending cycles of abuse, and Kai represents rejecting manipulation of internal colonialism. Maggie, on her own terms, chooses to find healing and rediscovering who she is beyond her struggles.

Her last words to Kai and Neizghání, reaffirms her reclamation of self and “being more than a killer” (277). Her internal dialogue before killing Neizghání is more confident about the path she must choose to find internal healing:

“There’s something I want more than Neizghání. Even more than Kai... I think I want life too. And love. A love that doesn’t try to kill me ... there’s a little girl I need to save.’

‘What girl? He [Neizghání] spits. You’re choosing a five-fingered girl over me?’

Remembering that girl on the ridge above Fort Defiance who lost her nalí, and who has been lost ever since. “‘yeah, I guess I am’” (Roanhorse 281).

Maggie’s story revolves around her growth as a character, one that experiences many intersectional adversities that impact the many realities of Indigenous women. The theme of violence in Maggie’s story is not romanticized, nor do Maggie’s characteristics subject her to a mere victimhood. Her journey in how she chooses to define herself out of trauma as Roanhorse writes against the idea that all Indigenous women are born to be victims (prey). Nor do Indigenous women feel the need to conform to the ideals of inferiority to uphold male hegemony. Maggie represents the women that fight their own monsters every day, and even with the pain that comes with it, they still find a way to defy the odds.

Maggie mirrors the rise of women’s roles to dismantle the hetero-patriarchal constructs that infiltrate Indigenous communities and replicate the uneven distributions of power. She embodies survival and strength in taking back her power. The trope Roanhorse uses to abolish gender roles and deconstruct power relations lies in the dismantling of Neizghání as the expected “he-man”

that dominates Western sci-fi: “He-man, Master of the Universe... invulnerable. He has no weakness. Sexually he is super-potent. He does exactly what he pleases, everywhere at all times” (Russ 203). This description is Neizghání, and his role as a dominant masculine character plays into the Western ideals of masculinity equaling power and femininity equaling powerlessness.

Maggie counters the he-man trope and ultimately reframes women’s position as equally authoritative. She represents the resiliency of Indigenous women, we are just as powerful if not more so, than the forces that work against us. Maggie is the center, the leader of her story, and the ultimate heroine. She honors survivors of violence and advocates to end cycles of racial and gendered violence against Indigenous women that silence our voices and dehumanize our existence. Her awakening to self-worth, self-love, and inner strength speaks to the decolonial process of mind and self.

These three main characters are self-representations of Indigenous women recovering power in their individual identities. The struggle to escape the confines of colonial recognition is the recovery from a dehumanizing process of invisibility. The stories in this chapter offer complex, distinct, and validating representations of Indigenous identity as women. Better yet, they are fighting against colonial powers and reasserting the image of Indigenous women as heroes, warriors, and leaders. These representations affirmatively refuse the “racialized, gendered and sexualized nature” of colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous women at a physical and personal level (Simpson chp 7, pg. 5).

The journeys of each character redefine the terminologies and categories put upon them to make them their own. Each differentiate in their acts to find empowerment in their lives. Each embodies and reinforces a strong sense of individual self-determination and freedom to choose practices that are meaningful to them in the context of their own realities and lives. This process

of reclaiming control over ways of knowing and being, not only aids in the process of decolonizing the mind of readers and how they perceive Indigenous women but the empowerment in the message; we are the heroines of our own stories.

CHAPTER 2: Honoring Differences and Belonging

“Along with the bad, there was a lot of good too. There is so much for us to share and weave together...”

- Celu Amberstone, Refugees

Invisibility is present in every story at the societal, communal, familial, and individual sphere, but the personal level is most important in this analysis of Indigenous women characters. The characters in this chapter provide intimate understandings of their realities. As Devon Mihesuah states, "reconstructions of the intricacies of Indian women's lives must be specific to time and place" (18). Every character is different from the next, but the "common core" of struggle against settler-colonialism, and the impact of displacement are central themes to each story. The use of introspection and catharsis to magnify the subjectivity of each character translates the positive responses to resisting the felt experiences of invisibility, also known as internalized colonization: "the pain and self-hatred absorbed in a racist society" and the absorption of historical and intergenerational trauma resulting as shame (8).

The stories in this chapter explore Indigenous women embodying resistance to silence (or shame) that "afflict us in the subterranean levels of our being" (Bird 67). Each story is a window into the diverse experiences lived by Indigenous women and the internal response to the impact of settler-colonialism. Dian Million's Felt Theory explains that Indigenous women use their stories to form bridges that "other people might cross, to feel their way into another experience" (76). The lives and experiences of the authors inform the characters and serve to connect with a broad audience and, more specifically, Indigenous women readers.

The characters symbolize the recovery of voice, and the empowerment in blood memories: history, ancestry, home, and heritage despite the felt experiences of invisibility. Their connections to blood memories are a powerful act in resisting shame and their accounts of displacement. They ignite the healing practice of internal recognition through their memories to highlight the act of self-preservation. The characters in “Refugees” (2004), “Né Łe!” (2016), and *The Girl Who Grew a Galaxy* (2013) encourage the power of voice in speaking our truths as Indigenous women. Our experiences provide valuable felt knowledge to inform ourselves, each other, and the next generation against invisibility as a part of the continually morphing colonial system.

The novella “Refugees” by Celu Amberstone (Cherokee) from Grace Dillon's *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction* introduces a first-person relocation narrative of the main character, Qwalshina. Qwalshina's story describes a lizard race called the Benefactors, who populate a new planet with Indigenous Earthlings. Her community has been on the new planet, Tallav'Wahir, for seven generations to "ostensibly protect Earth's seed" (Dillon 64). The Benefactors claim that they are helping Qwalshina's community. However, when a new wave of urban Indigenous peoples called the Fosterlings are brought to repopulate Tallav'Wahir they rebel against the Benefactors. Qwalshina reconsiders her initial understanding of "home" and the true meaning of her people's survival.

Amberstone introduces two groups of descendants from Indigenous nations, or as Dillon states, the "Indigenous rooted," and the "Indigenous routed" (64). The question of home and belonging constitutes one of the central themes of the story, both regarding the first wave of refugees, coming from community-based tradition, and the second wave of resettled urban Indigenous peoples. The second wave remains aware of their status as the intruders, those who do not

belong. The experiences of the Indigenous rooted and the Indigenous routed significantly differ despite both groups experiencing a sense of displacement. Amberstone illustrates two different experiences of resistance to invisibility and the feelings of internalized colonialism as a result of displacement.

Qwalshina begins her story describing a blood offering to what she calls, "Mother Stone". Her blood is red, an "alien color on this world... I am a child from the stars- a refugee, driven from my home" (1). She cuts her arm with a ceremonial knife and explains the ritual she partakes in to ground her connection between herself and the Earth. The description of her blood signifies her inability to fully acclimate to her current home despite her people living there for generations. She is not from the world she inhabits, but she asserts her sense of belonging through blood memory: "Blood. The people say it is the carrier of ancestral memories and our futures promise" (1). Her ancestral heritage and knowledge are rooted in tradition and memories. Amberstone's use of blood memory is an act of resistance to invisibility and ignites internal recognition to assert belonging despite the feelings of alienation and displacement. The dichotomy between alienation and belonging is apparent in Qwalshina's position, and it becomes more complicated when the new refugees arrive.

Qwalshina tells of her concern for the new wave of Fosterlings as the Benefactors tell them of the urban violence and wars that have destroyed Earth. She hopes the new "settlers" can adjust to the simple way of living on Tallav'Wahir and will not struggle to live in an environment that has also been hard on her community. Her first reaction to the Fosterlings establishes the barrier of difference between both groups: "They are so alien. It is hard to believe we are the same species" (4). A young woman named Sleek is adopted into Qwalshina's family. Sleek also sees Qwalshina as alien, both perceive the other as foreign.

Nevertheless, Qwalshina attempts to make Sleek feel a part of the community, but Sleek is skeptical about Qwalshina's intentions: "You think you know what's best for everyone, don't you?" (17). Sleek shows her reluctance to the way Qwalshina and her people live, calling them "ignorant savages" and criticizing the mind control the Benefactors have over the community (10). There are various moments of conflict between them representing the conflict between Indigenous experiences and modern lifestyles as well as the cultural norms of the old and new generation of refugees. Their experiences as settler-colonial subjects render them unrecognizable to each other; they perpetuate invisibility through the lack of understanding of each other's perspectives.

The reservation experiment on Tallav'Wahir addresses the elimination tactic to seclude and strip Indigenous populations of power. The Benefactors even implant communications technology into both groups to monitor their communication with each other. They are confined spatially, violated physically, and positioned against each other. The separation, disconnection, and alienation of both groups manifest socially and causes the groups to see each other as Other. The incompatibility between Qwalshina and Sleek magnifies the root of the cause between their disconnect. The issue of removal, consent, and physical violence done to the refugees reiterates the manifestation of settler colonialism in both nation-based and urban upbringing, and equally, perpetuates the physical and symbolical violence of invisibility.

Qwalshina observes Sleek and other Fosterlings and documents the emotional turmoil evident in their behavior. She does not understand why the Fosterlings are "so angry" all the time and refuse to become a part of a better community (8). Sleek and the other Fosterlings represent outward emotions of the felt experiences of trauma and interruption from colonial control that negatively affect the body, mind and spirit. They insist they did not have choice when being

taken away from Earth; they are deplorable bodies of experimentation, their humanity rendered invisible. Qwalshina begins to question the intentions of the Benefactors: "Did we do right to make them give up everything? Our Benefactors advised it, but... Are we too complacent and judgmental? What if we are living a lie- what is the people from Earth are right?" (11,31). The introspection of Qwalshina's own beliefs of the Benefactors begins to breakdown the barriers of alienation between the two groups. She begins to understand the pervasive and manipulative control the Benefactors cede over her community.

The responses of Qwalshina and Sleek illustrates the diversity of felt experiences in the conditions of colonialism. Qwalshina represents the experience of a traditional knowledge bearer and her concern for cultural continuance against erasure. Her lived experiences as a confined and monitored specimen on Tallav'Wahir for generations reveals the cultural preservation Qwalshina embodies as an act of resistance. Her survival depends on her ability to stay culturally intact against the confinement of the Benefactors. Sleek represents the experience of an outsider, and she represents the invisibility of agency, acceptance, and belonging. Sleek, as a new relocated member, does not want to give up her identity or sense of home under the rule of the Benefactors. Both women are advocating for the visibility of their humanity and their distinct perspectives. They represent important aspects of survival and identity. Most importantly, their subjectivity represents not just the difference in experience but their different responses of resistance to invisibility.

The most violent scene in the story is when Qwalshina discovers Sleek is a part of the rebellion with other Fosterlings. They attempt to take a Benefactor ship back to Earth, but the ship brutally kills all of them, including Sleek. Qwalshina realizes they used their communication implants to conspire against the Benefactors. As a metaphor, the implants simultaneously represent the

physical violence on Indigenous bodies and the regulation of Indigenous freedom. Instead of the entity controlling the self, Sleek uses the implant to reclaim her agency as an act of resistance. Amberstone is bringing light to the common struggle Indigenous women share: the fight for our lives against the evading colonial system that renders our humanity and rights as Indigenous beings invisible.

As Qwalshina mourns Sleek, the Benefactors negotiate whether or not to keep her community alive. She and her people are afraid: "what will the day bring to my people, life or termination?" (38). The question highlights the historically violent conditions Indigenous peoples experience against settler colonialism. Qwalshina still keeps making offerings to the Mother Stone, in hopes of protecting the only sense of home she attains. She embodies the survival of Indigenous knowledge and seeks to pass on the blood memories that preserve her community's identity. Sleek also signifies the importance of memories connecting one's identity found in the home as a physical space. The contrast between Qwalshina and Sleek emphasizes the common struggle of colonization and the different ways we find empowerment and practice resistance to invisibility in our own lives.

Darcie Little Badger's (Lipan Apache) short story "Né Łe!" from Hope Nicholson's *Indigenous LGBT Sci-Fi Anthology: Love Beyond, Space & Time* also focuses on the importance of memory and remembering as resistance. "Né Łe!" is the story of Dottie, a Lipan Apache veterinarian from Earth, on her way to Mars. There is an emergency on board the spaceship and she is awakened from her stasis pod by pilot, Cora. Dottie soon learns Cora is also Indigenous. Cora is from the Navajo Nation, whose nation has its own sovereign off-Earth space colony called Diné Orbiter. Their experiences are parallel to one another in this Futuristic world despite their cultural differences. The significance of their relationship reiterates the positive outcomes

through internal recognition when finding a sense of belonging through remembering to combat the felt experiences of invisibly.

Dottie's first comments in the story illustrate emotions of uncertainty about her new adventure. Her first experience on the spaceship is when Cora wakes her up for an emergency. A profound moment of recognition emerges when Dottie questions Cora about choosing her and not any of the other doctors on board. Cora explains that her decision was made based upon Dottie's qualifications, she explains: "When enough people look down on you, doubt takes root. It makes you question every accomplishment and blame success on luck or favors" (70). Cora's understanding of the absorption of systemic violence on a personal level speaks to the internalized colonialism many Indigenous women experience in the struggle for visibility. She is not only speaking for her and Dottie's position as women in science, but she is making a more substantial claim for the visibility of Indigenous women as respected, capable, modern beings in the world today.

As they get to know each other, both share their Indigenous heritages, and this leads Dottie to reflect on how this may have influenced Cora's decision to wake her up: "Cora chose me. I'm Lipan Apache, and though my tribe is markedly less centralized and powerful than the Navajo Nation, we have a lot in common. Matrilineal roots. Respect for wisdom and family. A history rife with suffering" (69). Dottie is connecting the similar values they share as Indigenous women with their distinct cultural heritages. She also mentions the common struggle, referring to history with suffering. Little Badger acknowledges the impact of colonialism but focuses on their positive commonalities, and even more so, acknowledges the positive recognition shared between them.

A moment of catharsis emerges between the two women as a form of healing. Cora's encouragement and understanding demonstrate a physical embrace, and in this way, attempts to counter the inner-doubt Dottie feels about herself. Cora's squash blossom is felt against Dottie's chest to imply the visibility of one's existence as a valid existence. Although the squash blossom is representative of Navajo culture, its presence symbolizes the initiation of internal self-recognition felt by Dottie. Dottie is reminded that she is meant to be in the position that she is in, and the squash blossom emphasizes Indigenous presence in a futuristic setting where women are leaders, a reminder that they always have been; Dottie and Cora are a part of this legacy. This exchange highlights a supportive and encouraging reaction exemplifying the importance of women supporting each other, especially in spaces that cater to Western expectations.

Dottie's uncertainty of belonging stems from earlier experiences in her life that she later reveals to Cora. She describes her family farm back on Earth, she says:

"All lost after the urban relocation measure passed... no water, no food, no space- very few people could afford the country life.'

'The U.S government moved your family? You didn't live on the rez?'

'My tribe never had one,' I said. 'I'm descended from people who fought or fled the invasion. Isn't it funny how ancient history still screws us over?'

'You don't have to talk about the farm if it's a sore spot.'

'I like remembering.'" (Little Badger 71).

Like Qwalshina's story, Dottie endures the historical traumas of relocation. There are several moments of internal dialogue in Dottie's story when she recalls memories of her parents and her time living on the farm. The impact of removal is felt significantly for Dottie as she portrays the anxiety about her sense of identity that was once tied to a place called home. In Dottie's

experience, her family's removal is history repeating itself. Dottie's background story also infers that her parents are no longer living in this new era. Her experiences of loss internally translate to her feelings of invisibility. She is navigating a futuristic world where her family and homeland no longer exist, hoping Mars will lead to a new sense of belonging.

Dottie and Cora's relationship builds the internal recognition that helps Dottie reframe her memories as connections to ground her in who she is regardless of where she is. Her memories are temporal connections reminding her that not all is lost. The memories Dottie carries with her becomes an act of resistance to the feelings of invisibility as she no longer associates them with pain, but knowing these memories are her connection to family, home, and heritage. Her retelling of her past to Cora communicates her subjectivity on the experience of relocation with her family. Acknowledging her pain from this event allows her to transform her felt knowledge into connections of belonging regardless of spatiality. Similar to Qwalshina's understanding of blood memories, Dottie carries her memories with her as a link to her family's history and, therefore, asserts her purpose for the future.

Despite the inadequacy and uncertainty of belonging that Dottie feels at the beginning of her story, by the end, she chooses to return to Earth with Cora: "Hand in hand, we turned our backs on Mars" mending the reconnection to home (76). She describes feeling weightless in making this decision. Dottie explains that her memories are the only things she carries with her. The loving relationship she builds with Cora exemplifies the empowering relationships we can create and encourage as Indigenous women.

Cherie Dimaline's (Metis) *The Girl Who Grew A Galaxy* also addresses the issue of displacement and belonging while exemplifying what Dian Million calls a sixth sense used to transform a "debilitating force of an old shame into a powerful experience" (56). Dimaline's novel immerses

readers into a very personal perspective of the main character Ruby Bloom, a Métis woman, battling her own thoughts that come with childhood traumas. Invisibility for Ruby stems from the intergenerational traumas felt within her family, and the learned behavior of silencing she absorbs and inflicts upon herself. Her story is about reclaiming the power of voice and the power of blood memories as resistance to internalized colonialism.

The birth of Ruby's "galaxy" that orbits her head begins to take form after several traumatic childhood events. The first planet, guilt, comes to being for Ruby at age seven shortly after her grandfather passed away. Soon after, her relationships with her mother and father seem to sprout more authoritative planets. As Ruby becomes of age, the galaxy is to its full potential. The allegorical planets represent feelings of guilt, envy, anxiety, uncertainty, alienation, panic, abandonment. There are also two moons: "Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and Agoraphobia... A pink spotted one, a loud sparkly affair, Fantasy... A small marble named Longing that is the brightest of all the orbs" and to complete the universe is also a paranoid asteroid belt, the constellation Apathy, and a star, Humiliation (8). This crowded and chaotic universe alienates Ruby from the rest of the world until she decides to face her fears of the pain she has absorbed through generations of colonial violence.

Ruby's dialogue through the story is highly negative about herself. As a young girl, she blames herself for the death of her grandfather, for her father leaving her mother soon after, and for her mother's depression. She blames herself for everything else that goes wrong in her life. Guilt's voice takes up much of the dialog between the planets, calling her: "*Killer. Crazy. Unloveable.*" (28). This planet is the harshest, and a constant reminder of the hate she feels for herself: "She spent a lot of time alone. She was afraid of the consequences of doing otherwise, consequences that were drilled into her head by her pessimistic planetary advisor" (30). Although Ruby

maintains a more significant relationship with her father, neither parent seems to offer her guidance or even vocalize their concern for her well-being. Ruby seems to drown in her own thoughts without being able to cope adequately. There are several times Ruby overturns her feelings of sadness, especially with the onset of feeling tears. She does not let herself cry in times of grief and even questions the feeling as if crying is not a natural emotional response. Her emotional turmoil is continually suppressed and further enables behavior that silences her own voice.

The suppression of Ruby's emotions, thoughts, and opinions is a learned behavior. Ruby describes her family as one that never talks. Ruby's father is known as a drinker and her mother as a stoic, emotionless woman that never cries. This inability to have a nurturing dialog between her and her parents is a pattern of silencing. Ruby remembers her great Aunt hinting at the closing of residential schools happening twenty years ago from when this story takes place-- implying that her parents may have experienced the residential school system in Canada, most certainly her grandparents. Ruby is not only enduring her own personal, everyday struggles, but she is also carrying pain that transcends many generations of silencing, erasure and felt experiences of invisibility.

The repercussions of settler colonialism alienate individuals not only from their families, communities, and cultures but from themselves. Thus, Ruby's invisibility perpetuates in her family dynamic and results in her feeling unworthy of attaining visibility for herself in any aspect of her life. Ruby exemplifies the fragmentation of familial relations, and severe lack of a sense of belonging. Her only source of connection is her Aunt Harriet. She honors and validates Ruby's struggles and teaches her to move past her fears. In a pivotal moment of the story, Aunt Harriet takes Ruby to a medicine man to help her understand the agony she carries with her. The

medicine man identifies a personal connection Ruby has with water and she is named Chibiish'kwe, Big Water woman. Her Aunt reiterates that she holds on to too much, but that her name will help her carry the burden until she can let it go.

Aunt Harriet explains to Ruby that water is blood: "It's blood of the Earth... it where we keep memory, the memory of our people. It's how we pass the songs, and sometimes, without trying, how we pass that hurt too. Without our blood memories we are alone; we are without people" (256). This explanation of blood and water speaks to Million's argument of transcending pain that lives on in Indigenous families. Ruby's reaction to the naming ceremony is her internal recognition of ancestral connections she inherits. Her inheritance of memories flows through her, and her Aunt urges her the pain is not the only measure of her existence. Her blood memories also pass on her connections to the land, her family, her culture, and her language.

Ruby acknowledges a sense of belonging as she learns traditional ways of being through Harriet's teachings. When her Aunt passes, she discovers that Harriet knew about the planets but never said anything. She feels more invisible than she has ever felt and decides to leave home for college, time-lapses to ten years and Ruby does not return home. Nevertheless, she is still giving in to the planets confining her from engaging fully with her adult life. This resiliency to move forward is in Ruby's most positive memories with Harriet, and it does not strike her how significant her memories are in grounding her confidence until she faces every element of her universe.

Ruby removes herself from dealing with the pain over the years of her youth and completely estranged herself from her family in hopes of finding a sense of home across the country. She practices self-preservation and believes that moving away will bring her peace. However, when told her father is dying, she goes back home to say goodbye. In the last exchange with her father,

he tells her that she was always afraid of getting hurt while growing up, but that pain is not a weakness; it is a strength and proof of life. Dimaline is illustrating the positive understanding of felt knowledge. She is reframing pain as a power, a symbol of strength. Ruby realizes the pain she has carried is not hers to blame, neither her weakness nor something she must continue to fear.

After reconnecting with her father, she finally lets out a cry that sweeps away most of her planets. The illustration of catharsis through Ruby's crying symbolizes the enormous weight of pain she has carried for so long. Million states that felt knowledge allows one to acknowledge and feel pain in the sense that it must be dealt with for the individual to heal. Ruby begins to recall the teachings of her Aunt. She learns through the reconnection with her father that she no longer has to bear the pain she has taken on. She is able to become whole through the personal reconnection and her memories with Harriet; the cycle of intergenerational trauma ends with Ruby as she chooses to move on from the past.

The most profound instance of Ruby engaging with her blood memories is her dream at the end of the story. She is at her Aunt's house walking into Lake Huron, a place they would go to when she was younger. This time it rains and washes away her planets entirely. Each planet falls into the lake and becomes fish and 'head home'. In an earlier memory, she recalls a moment with Harriet when teaching her to fish. Harriet comments on the changing of migration patterns: "The fish don't want to come home. And even if they've been doing it for thousands of years, a fish can change his mind too. But, the fact is, they know that home is there waiting for them, in the end. S'why they can be brave enough to make the change in the first place" (250). Harriet's explanation for why the fish do not want to come home is a reference to Indigenous communities and families that have not yet healed from past oppressions.

Ruby is a character that embodies the resiliency of the Indigenous psyche and recovering from trauma in a time of reconciliation. Her story is not just a coming of age novel but delves into the specific familial moments that impact her childhood and how historical trauma has manifested into the contemporary lives of many Indigenous women. Ruby never feels at home growing up with her family; it is clear to Ruby that the place she grew up in is not home. Like the fish her Aunt refers to, she is brave enough to make a change for herself and mend the connections in her life to attain healing. Devon Mihesuah asserts that when Indigenous women create their own destinies, they also create self-esteem, confidence, emotional security, and respect (33). Finding our voices is a different journey for every Indigenous woman. Much like Ruby's story, we get to decide our own paths and how we choose to resist and heal from invisibility; we are the centers of our universes, and we have the power to create better worlds, especially, when we encourage healing for ourselves.

In each of these stories, the characters offer an intimate perspective into the lives of Indigenous women. These perspectives analyze invisibility as a systematic operation felt at a personal level. Qwalshina, Dottie, and Ruby reflect the distinct experiences of their authors and hold the emotional knowledge reflecting the truth of survival and the resiliency that arise from it. The diversity of experiences of each character show significant differences and commonalities. However, the common core of struggle is present in each story. The characters overcome the feelings of internalized colonialism and the personal subjugation of invisibility.

Qwalshina, Dottie, and Ruby are three very different women from different cultural backgrounds. Qwalshina and Dottie's stories pair the main character with a polar opposite of the same racial and gender group. However, they differ in their experiences, especially in terms of living location, cultural connections, and histories with colonial oppression. Both relationships

offer a different understanding of resistance to invisibility. The significance of comparing the difference of perspectives side by side amplifies the spectrum of experiences of Indigenous women living under colonial conditions. One without the other does not allow for a full understanding of the history of settler colonialism and the extent of its manifestations. The diversity of experiences matter. The voices in these stories advocate to inform the next generation of the many obstacles and challenges we face, and they also encourage positive responses to take on the common core of struggle.

Their stories are specific to the truth they want to tell, and Qwalshina, Dottie, and Ruby's experiences challenge the understanding of belonging in terms of temporal and spacial connections. Ruby's story in relation to Qwalshina and Dottie also mirrors the struggle of relocation and belonging as an urban Metis woman. However, the story is much more introspective into her psyche and internal response to systemic and internalized colonialism. She finds solace in the traditional teachings of blood memories from her Aunt. All three characters harness this power of blood memories to feel whole. The act of self-preservation to endure their struggles is especially profound in acknowledging their ancestral ties. The characters, as a collective, reveal the different ways one internally recognizes their sense of belonging, and through the power of blood memories, they find connection.

The felt knowledge of each story illuminates the differences in survival and the resistance against invisibility. They also address the pain and suffering that arise from it. However, their lived experiences also centralize their responses and positively acknowledge the strength to overcome the adversities placed upon them. All three characters resist internalized colonialism through the power of remembering and blood memories in these stories illustrating the embodiment of felt knowledge. As Indigenous women that carry on the next generation, the authors are arguing for

women to choose to pass on the connections that remind us of our strength and power. To love ourselves and allow ourselves to heal despite the generations of pain and suffering from conditions we have lived and continue to face.

The personal experiences in each story relay the importance of subjectivity of Indigenous women's lives. These stories are acts of resistance because of the emotional knowledge they carry; this is their power as windows into another's world. They are imagined stories, but this does not make them any less real. It is impossible to understand the lives of Indigenous women without the awareness of the differentiating conditions that make up our realities. Despite the adversities and traumas endured by Indigenous women, speaking our truths not only challenges settler truths but will aid in the ending of damaging cycles of invisibility in Indigenous communities and settler society. The power of voice in each story encourages Indigenous women to make better worlds for ourselves. They are Indigenous women “making the best of what colonialism has wrought” (7 Mihesuah). Our lives are not defined by struggle; our realities are not invisible. We embody strength and resilience to endure and thrive as creators of our own destinies.

CHAPTER 3: Resurgence and Healing

“This clutch of women is full of every possible medicine; if you know your light isn’t always shining, you just learn to move along with the rhythm they set in motion and what for the story to unfold.” – Lee Maracle, *Celia’s Song*

The stories in this chapter convey the process of returning and Indigenous women participating in resurgence as a healing practice. Each story mirrors the strength and resilience of Indigenous knowledge as it exists across time and against settler colonialism. "Returning to ourselves" is a concept that derives from the Anishinaabemowin word Biskaabiiyang. It is the decolonial practice of discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried from the impact of colonization. More importantly, it is a process of healing and recovering ancestral traditions to adapt to our "post-Native Apocalypse" world (Dillon 10). The stories in this chapter are not all Anishinaabe, but each reveals a story of Indigenous women participating in continuance and embodying the concept of returning to ourselves. Embracing our true selves as Indigenous women requires us to not only heal ourselves, but as members of resilient nations we are responsible for continuing to uplift our relations. The heart of a people is found in community, and thus, the infiltration of Western hegemony aims to break and rid of Indigenous relations. Stemming from methods of elimination, the issue of invisibility is not just an individual experience, but equally familial, and communal. Remembering who we are as Indigenous beings and our power in unity against forces of modernity and colonial structures, we resist the cycle of erasure and invisibility. Therefore, our responsibility as Indigenous women is to strengthen our relations and continue to lead the legacy of resiliency through example.

Leanne Simpson's theory of resurgence is compatible with the act of returning as it advocates for the reconnection with traditional Indigenous practices and knowledges. Simpson states that resurgence "re-establishes the processes by which we live with who we are within the current

contexts we find ourselves" (17). Through nation-based knowledges, we can find empowerment in our own distinct ways of being. Returning is not receding to the past but bringing the strength of ancestors to bear in the present (Simpson). The empowerment in these stories is reigniting the power of women in community, continuance, and celebrating survival.

“The Eaters” by Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe) from *Mitewacimowina: Indigenous Science Fiction and Speculative Storytelling* explores a post Native-apocalypse story of an Anishinaabe mother and her family's survival of a world phenomenon called "The Vanishings" (120). The Mother learns from family members and several newscasts that millions of people are disappearing into thin air. When her family and others from the Bear Lake Anishinaabek nation find refuge in caves on their ancestral lands, celestial beings present themselves to the community and they claim responsibility for the Vanishings. The Vanishings are the elimination of the Kaatootoo, also called the Eaters. The intention is to restore balance from their all-consuming behavior, which has desecrated the Earth. The Mother realizes her community is responsible for beginning the world again. They must heal from the ways of the Eaters. The perspective of the Mother intertwines with a communal worldview, a traditional storytelling technique, to understand the apocalyptic event not as the end of humanity, but the resurgence of Indigenous communities and lifeways.

The discovery of the Vanishings leads the reader to assume the disappearances are only the leaders of imperialist and patriarchal hegemonies of the world. The Mother initially believes it is "the bad people" that are disappearing: "The boards of every pharmaceutical company- gone. Prime Ministers, Presidents, Kings, Queens, Heads of States- gone. Bankers. Oil tycoons. CEOs. The Pope. Gone, gone, gone" (122). While traveling to the caves, she soon learns it is not all politicians, the rich, or people in power. Once she is with her community, celestial beings visit to

warn them of the remaining Eaters. They describe the Eaters as non-humans brought to Earth in hopes of learning the ways of the original people, humans.

The brief contact with the celestial beings leaves the community unsure, "What was Kaatootoo, what did it mean to be human?" (130). The questioning of self prompts the Mother and community members to reflect on their role as original peoples of Earth. The self-reflexivity is constantly re-enforced within the story to critique the relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and our relation to the world we inhabit. The main character also invites the reader to participate in a more personal dialogue that she instigates by questioning her duty as a human. She is questioning herself and her community in hopes of remembering what it means to be human, and she is asking the reader to do the same. This act of mirroring the story embodies initiates the process of returning as it unveils the complex positioning of who is human and Eater.

Many weeks after the initial visit, as the people eat together, a storyteller recalls the old stories of the Windigo. The Mother remembers these stories told to her as a young girl: "The Kaatootoo are Windigowag... It is true we knew it in our hearts. Our stories were not legends; we knew it in our bones. Not fairy tales. They were history. They were warnings. They were survival guides. They were textbooks" (135). At this moment, the power of storytelling emphasizes the knowledge that preserves, teaches, and evokes Indigenous ways of being. The tradition of storytelling is not one of make-believe and childish entertainment as it has been perceived through the Western gaze. It is the Mother who asserts that the stories she and many other members grew up with are lessons to aid the people.

This reflection also leads the Mother to think of other prominent beings in other Indigenous cultures: "Sasquatch? Little People? We talked about the beings that populated our stories and

the stories of the land. Giants, Maui, Spider Woman, Nanabush... Sky People! (136). The Mother realizes their meeting with the celestial beings were Sky People. She insists the community must speak with them again, as she calls them by name. In doing this, others gasp in reaction- "of course!"- the illustrating the act of remembering. These stories hold knowledge, such as the one the Mother is a part of, they function to lead humanity forward. Akiwenzie-Damm is giving visibility to traditional stories that are foundational to several Indigenous cultures as they encourage sustainability and co-operation between human and non-human beings. She also brings visibility to the power of mother figures as links to understanding the histories embedded within a culture and how this knowledge becomes her responsibility to pass on.

Remembering the old stories, the Anishinaabek also return to traditional ways of living on their ancestral lands. The Mother points to the children gathering and listening to storytellers, adults teaching others how to build a fire, how to fish, and eating and preparing meals together: "Our families, we were all assembled, we smudged, prayed, and held sweats. Then we talked. We spoke about who we are. About our dreams for the future" (136). The revitalization of community is pertinent to bringing back the old world and, for many, relearning the ways of the Anishinaabek. The Mother mentions other Indigenous nations coming to their lands. The welcoming and building of community the Anishinaabek exemplifies is essential to reinstating Indigenous systems and, thus, portrays resiliency in unity.

The Mother mentions the forming of a delegation with other nations in the area and forming a Council of 13. As a chosen speaker on behalf of her community, the Mother represents the revitalization of traditional roles between women and men as equally valued. The revival of Indigenous political systems organically arises within this story amidst the chaos to once again repeat the theme of perseverance and, most importantly, situates women as respected leaders of

their community to acknowledge their role in continuance. Akiwenzie-Damm underscores survival as an experience many Indigenous peoples understand and simultaneously, the fear in what it means to begin again. Nevertheless, it is returning to the foundations, the values and knowledge that continue to carry us forth to nurture strong, encouraging relations.

Within this rebuilding, it comes to the attention of the community that several members experienced the loss of family from the Vanishings. The Mother insists the people must speak to the Sky People once more. The Sky People meet with the community and further explain their relation to the Anishinaabek. The community learns their designated role is to be caretakers of the Earth, teachers, and laugh-bringers: the people of good intentions (141). When the Anishinaabek asks more questions about Kaatootoo, the Sky People retell of the first invasion on Indigenous lands and nations, and further how settler colonialism has "poisoned" the minds of humanity.

They describe the Eaters as snakes devouring its own tail, and although the original peoples have met them with compassion, it will never be reciprocated: "Just as in our stories, the more they consumed, the bigger their hunger grew; they destroyed. These monsters had lived among us, even married and had children with us, and we'd seen them only as they wanted us to see them, not as they are." (139) Akiwenzie-Damm addresses entities responsible for maintaining the individualistic, all-consuming need for power and represents the destructive implications of such behavior: "Who claimed whole continents to themselves? Who unleashes power that can destroy all life in order to gain more power for themselves?" (149). This way of being leads to the decimation of the Earth and equally portrays the issue of invisibility as a result of settler colonialism acting as a structure to destroy and replace. The Sky People also warn that there are

no longer Eaters among the Anishinaabek. However, few remaining humans have learned from them.

They state that the Eaters caused not all great disasters. The people are also responsible, the ones who suffered "and began to believe that the Kaatootoo way is the power way" (141). The community discovers that some of its members are infected and have become Kaatootoo-in-thought. The debate between who is human and who is Kaatootoo-in thought conveys the impact colonialism continues to have on Indigenous communities. The infiltration of colonial values to replace and take away Indigenous power, sovereignty, recognition, values, and political systems ultimately break the foundations of community. Separating individuals from the community, if not physically, will be done through assimilation.

The Kaatootoo-in thought represents the concept of imbalance and Indigenous peoples embodying colonial behavior. Akiwenzie-Damm is writing back to the dominant society and the extractive attitudes that silence Indigenous voices and ways of being. However, she is also engaging with Indigenous audiences to reflect on the damage we have done to our own people. The Mother is a symbol of healing to break the cycles of abuse within Indigenous communities and reignite balance and direction through Indigenous ways of knowing and living.

Seven members identify with being Kaatootoo-in-thought, and the community debates whether to give them up to the Sky People. Despite many who argue their thinking will not change, they decide to keep the seven: "We can help them let go of that (Kaatootoo thought) and become their true selves" (143). The Mother describes the compassion shown to the other members to help them return to themselves revealing a powerful embodiment of remembering. As a uniquely human characteristic, compassion is a traditional value for many Indigenous cultures, an act of decolonial love. The transformation of no longer imitating colonial attitudes reflects the stories

and teachings that make us human. Akiwenzie-Damm writes a story that will be read and told to others and function as an act of passing on the process of becoming. “The Eaters” is like the stories the Mother learned; they are survival guides. The role of the Mother's experience as an observer, teacher, storyteller and leader brings visibility to the teachings learned within her community as they map the ways of becoming which in turn defines the possibilities of our humanity.

The Anishinaabek chose to honor humanity and agree to begin without Kaatootoo technology. Thus, they must rely on their own ways of knowing. The Mother’s community is left with instruction on what must be done, but once they are alone a feeling of uneasiness descends upon them:

This planet, our homeland, our Mother- and yet, we felt awkward, afraid, excited, and exhausted, like a family reunited after being torn apart by War or Disaster. It was a feeling some of us knew very well- and because of that, we knew that some families never reconciled after being torn apart by Residential School or the Children's Aid Scoops. We knew that it would take all our skills and resources to navigate the path ahead. We knew that some of us would never adjust... some would stumble and fall and get back up time and again, driven by the hope that their children and grandchildren would find their way with ease and joy.
(Akiwenzie-Damm 145)

Akiwenzie-Damm intricately weaves the past of many Indigenous people's experiences within the colonial state of Canada and parallels the embodiment of survival and continuance in the present to reiterate the strength in community. Many times, Indigenous peoples have had to begin anew out of trauma with hopes of building a better future for the following generations. Returning to ourselves as Indigenous women and people is about reconnecting, remembering, and recovering the traditional ways of being, yet it is also defining what it means to be human.

The Mother's community defines humanity by acting with love, kindness, gratitude, strength, and hope. Returning to ourselves is rediscovering the answers within the stories and teachings "about who, how, and why us" (Justice 35). The Sky People symbolize the return of Indigenous knowledge and lifeways found in the stories that help us understand our direction. The Mother as a storyteller reflects on the responsibility as women of Indigenous nations; we are barriers of knowledge and holders of nations; her story is also her people's story (Armstrong). "The Eaters" represents the collective journey in resisting the colonial systems, behaviors, and values that harm our own nations. Akiwenzie-Damm is leaving a story of possibility; she is leaving us a guide, passing on the lessons that we as women, as holders of nations, make the path for those to follow.

The act of returning is a personal, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual transformation. The novel *Monkey Beach* by Eden Robinson (Haisla) is a story about Lisamarie's coming of age experiences and her journey to find her brother, who is lost at sea. The novel's timeline is over a few days following the news about her brother. She is to meet her parents at the site of the accident. The story layers past and present memories triggered by personal trauma. Lisamarie tells her story in the first person, yet, there is a shift from the first person to the second person perspective to address the reader directly. Her story is a testament to the abuse and mistreatment of the Haisla people and the intergenerational consequences that the new generations face in present-day. As Robinson's audience, we are bearing witness to the manifestation of colonialism as repression in Lisamarie's life. Moreover, we are bearing witness to the duality of the dominant society and her Indigenous inheritance as she embodies the return of self and the resurgence of Haisla culture.

The historical background in the novel is the issue of the residential school system and the intergenerational repression of trauma, language, knowledge, and culture within Lisamarie's family. The duality of colonial reality clashing with the rise of Haisla culture is central to her story: "When I dreamed, I could see things in double exposure—the real world, and beyond it, the same world, but whole, with no clear-cuts, no pollution, no boats, no cars, no planes" (256). The double view she alludes to is present in all facets of her life. Robinson's introduces this doubling effect in the physical and spatial duplicate of Lisa's home Kitamaat: "the village has been called Kitamaat, even though it really should be called Haisla... To add to the confusion when Alcan Aluminum moved into the area in the 1950s, it built a 'city of the future' for its works and names it Kitimat too" (5). Lisa describes to the readers where Kitamaat Village is on a map. The Haisla people are "tucked" in between the mountains and the ocean. The renaming of her home represses the identity of the Haisla people, and more so, the duplication and respelling of the city Kitimat represent colonial society erasing Haisla presence. The invisibility Lisa refers to confines Haisla society to be hidden away as if never to be found even on a map. The territorial separation reveals the dominance of settler colonialism and the invisibility of Haisla culture.

The acts of repression against Haisla land also connects to the suppression within Lisamarie's family. Her mother, Gladys, strongly influences the suppression of traditions between her generation and Lisamarie's generation. Ma-ma-oo, Lisamarie's grandmother on her father's side, tells her that the ability to contact the dead is an inheritance from her mother's family.

Lisamarie's great grandmother was a medicine woman. She and her Mother share the gift, but her mother refuses to accept the Haisla gift. Ma-ma-oo insists that her mother "doesn't tell you when she sees things. Or she's forgotten how. Or she ignores it" (154). The self-inflicted suppression

emphasizes the silencing her mother went through and the lasting effect of residential school policies.

Ma-ma-oo and Gladys are also part of this duality Lisa is experiencing. Her mother represents repression while her grandmother is an embodiment of resurgence. In her relationship with her mother, Lisamarie feels uncertain about disclosing knowledge she learns from her grandmother: "I was uncomfortable sharing it with her. It felt it was something private" (80). The need for healing and reconnection between Lisamarie's generation and her parent's generation reveals the complexity of survivance, and the celebration of continuance. Gladys returning home from residential school brings visibility to continuance that allows Lisamarie to have the choice to return to the source, Ma-ma-oo. This survivance allows Lisamarie to not only revitalize what has been forgotten so that she may pass on the culture to future generations but to embrace her true self more freely than her parents were able to growing up. Lisamarie embodies healing that is not generationally parallel. "Returning to ourselves" is made possible because of the people that came before us, and who comes after us.

Lisamarie recalls much of her time with her grandmother making oochilan grease, picking berries, and learning Haisla stories. The relationship she has with Ma-ma-oo is a pathway to restoring balance. Her journey to reconnect is not only represented in the relationship she has with Ma-ma-oo but is also visible in the layering of first- and second- person passages. The second-person passages inform the reader about how to make oochilan grease, where to find soapberries and lessons in contacting the dead. Other passages describe the functions of the heart. Working in tandem, the passages hold knowledge and lessons from Ma-ma-oo, the reader is not only witnessing the learning dynamic between Lisamarie and Ma-ma-oo, but the reader is also the learner.

The passages are intimate and vivid, especially the passages that focus on the heart. One passage describes what the heart needs to properly function and the reader is instructed on the functions through self dissection: "Pull your heart out of your chest. Cut away the tubes that sprout from the top. Place your heart on a table. Take a knife and divide it in half lengthwise" (191).

Robinson is paralleling what the heart means as a physical and symbolical part of human life. More specifically, the heart of Haisla life has been broken in half, and for Lisa, "the split" reiterates the imbalance in her life and the invisibility she feels as she walks between two worlds. The reference of "you" in these passages is not only to mirror the visceral feeling and fragmented feeling colonialism continues to have on Haisla lives but for many other Indigenous women and people who were and are still trying to heal from the fragmentation.

The self-reflexivity Robinson demonstrates in her writing helps guide Lisamarie between the dichotomy of repression and resurgence. This practice is similar to Akwinzie-Damm's story, "The Eaters". Both characters, the Mother and Lisamarie are refusing the insidious forces of settler colonialism that alienates individuals not only from their families, communities, and cultures but from themselves. The process of returning to ourselves in "The Eaters" as a communal feat is also similar to the process Lisamarie goes through individually. Her spiritual connection to the dead allows her to see in two worlds, and her visions seem to scare her, especially when a little man comes to visit her at night: "As I grew older he became a variation of the monster under the bed or the thing in the closet, a nightmare that faded with the morning" (27). She struggles with the contrast between humans and ghosts in her double exposure perspective and the challenge to understand the presence of each ghost.

The reappearance of the little man is the most significant obstacle in her understanding of her double vision. She confides in Mam-ma-oo about the small visitor, and her grandmother explains

it is a tree spirit that once helped medicine men find wood for canoes. Ma-ma-oo tells her not to be afraid of what she does not know; they are just "ghosts" (253). For Lisamarie, this "monster" represents Haisla knowledge signifying its return and her fear of engaging with the knowledge. Similar to Akwinzie_Damm's story, Lisamarie and the Mother's engagement with Indigenous knowledge is a lesson relearned. Both characters engage with non-human beings that are initially unfamiliar to them but are reminded of their significance to their cultural identities through story. The interaction the Mother has with the Star People and Lisamarie's understanding of "ghosts" are not "monsters" at all; they are pieces of knowledge that have been silenced, erased, or forgotten from generations of repression on her family and people.

The fragmentation between familiar and unknown emphasizes the experience of colonial violence and its destruction to what should be a recognizable to one's culture. When trying to speak about the "ghosts" Lisamarie sees to her parents, her mother takes her to a psychiatrist, and she is ostracized by friends and classmates. Lisamarie's engagement with Haisla culture is strictly through Ma-ma-oo, the only individual that provides validation to take pride in her gift. Yet, when Ma-ma-oo passes, Lisamarie feels cut off from her family history and runs away to the city in hopes of ridding herself of the gift and the responsibilities that come with it.

When Lisamarie returns to the Haisla village, her presence reamplifies the supernatural occurrences. The duality between repression and resurgence emerges once again through land and animal entities around Kiiitimaat village. She dreams of hearing the ocean call to her. Her recollections of the ocean lead to her last memory of her and her brother, together on Monkey Beach. During their childhood, Monkey Beach was a place they frequently visited to camp. Their father told them stories of the B'qwus, Bigfoot, a mythical creature that would roam the island. She returns to Monkey Beach when she sets out to find her brother. Her memories lead up to her

arriving at the beach: "I want to stay here on Monkey Beach. Some places are full of power, you can feel it, like warmth, a tingle" (319). The cumulation of memories, the weaving between first and second perspective passages, and the connections to mythical creatures, animals, ghosts, the land, the ocean merge as Lisamarie answers to the supernatural.

The ocean is a reoccurring influence on her as it is a part of the place she grew up, but the emphasis of its presence throughout the story unveils the circular process of returning. The ocean represents the space that holds traditional knowledge and culture. She tries to communicate with crows that call to her from the beach, but she slips and bumps her head, and drifts under the ocean's surface. Underwater, she sees Ma-ma-oo, and her brother Jimmy who tries to help her to rise to the surface. While coming up from the bottom of the ocean, Lisamarie sees shadows of her uncle, her grandmother, and Jimmy on the beach dancing and speaking Haisla: "They are blurry, dark figures against the firelight. I can understand the words even though they are in Haisla, and it's a farewell song, they are singing about leaving and meeting again" (373). Her double vision is no longer as her worlds are now one signifying the reconnection to Haisla heritage and embracing her powers as a medicine woman. Ma-ma-oo warns her to harness her abilities for good once she breaks the surface and is rebirthed into a rebalanced world. As she embodies resurgence the distortions of colonialism no longer confine her to alienation, invisibility, fear, or fragmentation. She is made whole again and embraces who she was always meant to be.

Robinson's novel portrays the personal journey of reuniting with one's own histories, languages, and cultures that is both an intimate and spatial experience. Escaping the fragmentation inflicted by settler colonialism is resistance to the invisibility of Indigenous embodiment. Returning, for Robinson, begins with the personal journey to love and embrace the line of resiliency which one

inherits. Even more so, the celebration of survival through individuals maintaining generations of knowledge and traditions. She is writing against disconnection under the forces of modernity. Lisamarie is a symbol of renewal; she learns to love herself for who she is, where she comes from, and what makes her a Haisla woman. The advocacy of self-healing and pride in one's Indigenous identity are the steps to pass on continuance to others and bring visibility to women's self empowerment. Lisamarie's return symbolizes the possibility to reconnect, to be the beginning of others' return no matter one's place in generations or the knowledge one does or does not possess. The fear of returning is not knowing it is possible, and she reassures us that one can always go back.

The communal and individual acts of returning are equally empowering to the celebration of survival and continuance of culture. Lee Maracle's (Sto:lo) novel *Celia's Song* addresses the forces of colonialism and, more specifically, the violence against Indigenous women. There are several moments within the story characters reflect on instances of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse endured by women from individuals of settler society: "White men used to come on to the reserve, grab a girl walking down the road, rape her, and return her" (9). Yet, the most dominant, and horrific scene of violence is inflicted by an Indigenous man onto an Indigenous girl. The family's response to the violence and near-death situation reveals the extreme pain and anger felt by the women: "are we less than animals?" (135). This statement is a testament to the reoccurring violence against Indigenous women's bodies. The women take responsibility for caring for the child, and it is at the core of their unity that amplifies resurgence. Maracle shows the strength in unity, especially in the face of chaos and suffering. The women of the family take the lead, and instead of allowing the suffering to continue, they mirror resiliency and community coming together.

Maracle's novel centers on the narrators Mink and Celia, who share the role of storyteller. Several of Celia's family members also help tell the story to emphasize the importance of witnessing the violence, pain, and suffering that manifests through the legacy of Canada's Indian residential school system in a time of Reconciliation. The webbing of perspectives allows the reader to understand the extent of intergenerational trauma and the combatting power of resurgence through generational healing. The act of returning in *Celia's Song* also highlights the circular, co-dependent relationship that is not static or linear between generations. The linkage between community to family to individual is a complex system of transferring knowledge; therefore, the catalyst of resurgence can ignite at any level and thus permeate each. *Celia's Song* reveals the intimate journey of healing of a Sto:lo family and nation; and further, the embodiment of resistance in women's roles of continuance.

The novel begins with the shape-shifting narrator, Mink, introducing his role in telling the story. He is only a witness and Celia a seer; this is her story. Mink states, "this story needs a witness. This story deserves to be told; all stories do" (7). The interweaving between Mink and Celia reflect a dialogue between the reader and characters. Maracle is remapping and instructing readers about the position of witnessing, but unlike Mink who is only a storyteller, the characters are witnesses. The invisibility of Indigenous women's voices is due to the marginalization of our stories. It is important for others, both men and women to witness, hear, our stories. Like "The Eaters" and *Monkey Beach*, Maracle also uses a traditional storytelling technique that prompts the reader to participate and holds the reader accountable as a witness.

The discrepancy at the heart of the story is metaphorically insinuated by the presence of a two-headed serpent leaving the post above a forgotten longhouse door. The snake's heads, Loyal and Restless, battle for supremacy as they scowled through Nuu'chalnulth territory: "the serpent

surrounds them, steals their breath, squeezes their hearts, empties their bodies of empathy until only war will fill them (98). The snake represents the dichotomy of balance and imbalance; settler colonialism and Indigenous resiliency.

The dual influences of Loyal and Restless shape the lives of Celia and her family: "The people have no idea who they are anymore. They are sad, hurt, angry, and disconnected" (44). The weight of colonial violence on the Sto:lo nation visibly manifests in the relations within Celia's family reiterates the significance of intergenerational trauma. She drifts on the margins of her family and remains lost in the aftermath of her son's suicide: "everything is normal: they are talking and ignoring Celia" (45). Nevertheless, Mink knows Celia's power is a source of healing. He tries to reassure her, but "she is a seer, not a listener"; therefore, she must find her healing song inside her, embrace her power, to help guide her family against the suffering Restless brings into the community.

The snake represents the uneasiness and unbalance felt within Nuu'chalnulth territory. The longhouse Loyal and Restless awaken from has been abandoned for decades: "the bones in the longhouse are not very old. The ones under the house are older. They call out to the other bones, hoping the younger ones will join them in song. The ancient dead roll over, keep wiggling, and singing their way to the surface" (33). The ancestral connections resurrecting to the surface of Celia's reality parallels *Monkey Beach's* resistance to repression. The pathway to resurgence for her community is also mending the connections between the old and the new.

The bones are a reminder to recover what has been forgotten. The longhouse is a space that can be returned to and awaits for the people to find their way back. The personification of the land and its ties to emergence reflects the reconnection Celia finds with her mother and sisters. Mink suggests, "It's easy: the women need to find a way to reconcile the new life with the old story.

Remembering is a matter of context, and the context has changed" (63). The women have forgotten how to practice the old ways within the present. Like the bones, the women mirror the old and the new coming together, building a pathway to healing and remembering that relies on communication and visibility in one another.

Celia's family has witnessed several cultural tragedies: the flu epidemic, residential school, banning of ceremony. The systemic violence reveals the perpetuation of silencing in family relations. To reckon the relationship between her and her mother, "Celia thinks about the healing circle she belongs to. They talk to each other. She knows they need it, but now she wants it peppered between the other kinds of conversations they never seem to have anymore" (64). As she comes to this realization, Mink smiles at this thought as she is embodying the old ways. The mending between generations relies on having conversations about the enduring traumas and normalizing these conversations as foundations to starting over. Maracle employs this act of resistance to the silencing that must be extracted from communities in order to heal. Returning to ourselves is about trust, and thus, "Talking keeps us trusting. Trusting one another secures our sense of hope in the future. Silence kills hope. It will take a generation of talking to break down the walls." (75).

While discussing lost time with her mother, there is a realization between the two women: "we didn't begin again" (95). Maracle addresses the pain passed down through generations but focuses on the causes of the pain. Disrupting the cycles of pain and silencing begins with identifying the source of the pain to free from its power. Celia realizes communication demands responses, and her mother answers with an encouraging instruction to start again, implying the family and the community at large must return to the Sto:lo way of being. The power of returning and resurgence the family exudes is most apparent when Restless targets a residential

school survivor and community member, Amos, who sexually abuses the family's youngest female relative. Jacob, Celia's nephew, witnesses the gruesome act in a vision. Like Celia, Jacob is also a seer, and when he realizes his vision is real, the family comes together to save the little girl.

That tragedy is the center of the story, but it is the embodiment of enduring strength in the female leads that is the highlight of the tale. When caring for the girl, the women rely on traditional practices to heal her: "hanging herbs, all-night vigils, talking to the child," and there is skepticism from the partners of two family members that are Western-educated professionals. The division between the Sto:lo worldview and Western ideology clash during this time of revival. Maracle is arguing that Indigenous knowledges are the only real way to heal Indigenous communities, and the practice of them must be honored by Western society. As the women work on the little girl, one family member is questioned by her partner, "How do you reconcile the science we were taught to this?" as if to treat the healing practices as "magic" or "witchcraft" and rendering it as inferior. In this moment, the family member refutes the question:

Look at what we are doing, not how we are doing it. We are patching a child who has been tortured by one of our own. Some of us birthed the child who became the beast who did this. We didn't see the twists inside the boy who became this hateful man. We need to have some grave doubts, not about what we are doing now, but what we have been doing. We need to doubt who we have become. (Maracle 147)

Maracle's illustration of resurgence echoes Akiwenzie-Damm's understanding of humanity. In "The Eaters", the community members grapple with defining humanity and seek their answer by remembering the original Anishinaabek ways of being. Maracle is also questioning the sense of humanity in the Sto:lo community. The family member recenters Sto:lo knowledge and dismisses the standards and expectations of Western society. She argues for visibility and

validity in the healing process her family practices. She is also questioning the extent Western society has taken up space, mentality, and actions among her community as it has only led to destruction. Even more so, how this continues to render Indigenous women invisible to settler society and within Indigenous communities. "Returning to ourselves" positions Indigenous ways of being first so we are able to let go of "who we have become" under the system of colonialism. In order to regain our humanity as Indigenous women and for others to respect our humanity we must begin the healing process among our own communities.

As the family continues to heal the girl, other acts of reclaiming and resurgence are developing. Celia becomes more vocal and re-immerses herself in family relations. Family members notice her change in behavior, and it brings balance to the women as if they have been waiting for her to speak. The most pivotal moment of resurgence is when the women participate in song together with hopes it will help their young relative and it brings them closer together. Maracle's process of resurgence is not only within the act of storytelling but also within song: "Song moves us to humanity" (213). The frequency of singing restores the family ties and even for the young seer, Jacob, who can now follow confidently in the footsteps of his Aunt Celia.

As protectors of balance, the women of the family are responsible for shedding the memories of trauma and remember the teachings of Sto:lo tradition. The final act of healing the family deploys is the resurrection of the longhouse to place the snake back in its rightful place as protector. They invite Amos to the ceremony, and they all participate in dance. As he dances, the horror stories and old memories leave his body and his ancestors' take him of the human world. The dance scene reveals the abuse suffered in the residential school system and the reverberations of historical trauma — the family witnesses Amos' death as it symbolizes the end

of the cycles of abuse. The family works together, embodying resistance through dance and accentuates the historical and cultural endurance.

Celia's Song validates Sto:lo traditions using storytelling and song as acts of resistance to invisibility. Mink states, "it is about the snake, it is about ritual, about the ceremony and about restoring our original direction" and using these elements to bring balance into our lives and among our relations to heal (213). The women in Celia's family, including herself, rebuild their relations and influence their community through reclaiming traditions such as speaking, dancing, singing, and storytelling. They learn to return to ancestral knowledge and incorporate it into their lives that brings visibility to their humanity in the modern context. The significance of balance in Celia's family, and community relies on the act of remembering with strong Indigenous women creating the path to return.

The worldview in *Celia's Song* reflects on multiple perspectives but put women's perspectives at the center. The merging of individual, familial, and communal relations intricately woven together are a system that relies on communication with one another. Celia represents resurgence when the individual and familial system heal as a unit. The act of returning is a circular process, and the reader witnesses Celia give back to the generation before her as well as pass on knowledge to the younger generation. Her family symbolizes resurgence through the engagement of the community for healing to take place, and more importantly, the power that survives in the resiliency of matrilineal leaders as barriers of knowledge, culture, and traditions.

"The Eaters", *Monkey Beach*, and *Celia's Song* are teachings, survival guides, maps to help us return to ourselves, and exemplify resurgence and visibility in our own lives. These stories reveal the adaption and endurance of Indigenous culture. They show Indigenous knowledges and traditions flourishing despite the threat of colonial violence, specifically, the traumas endured

from Canada's residential schools. The stories acknowledge a piece of history that continues to be erased and continues to impact the lives of Indigenous women and peoples today. The characters in these stories mirror healing through nation-based practices and represent the influential role of women as knowledge holders. The women in these stories mirror the intentions of women who write about them; they honor a legacy of resiliency that defines Indigenous continuance. This chapter encourages the constellation in our actions in the present to bring forth futures that are "profoundly Indigenous" (Simpson 11; ch. 12). The power in these stories is the guiding words that seek to remind Indigenous women there is beauty in survival, strength in community, and that we are never lost; stories help lead us back to our original direction.

CONCLUSION

“I see your light. I see your essence. I see who you are.”

– Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We have Always Done*

Indigenous women's self-representation in Imagined Futurisms is an empowering act of resistance to invisibility. The use of science fiction extending to speculative and fantasy sub-genres to create "estranged worlds of the future" or "imaginary environments" brings the intersectionality of Indigenous women's experiences and realities to the forefront (Dillon 11). More specifically, the Indigenous Futurisms analyzed in this project act as pathways to freedom through the power of voice. Voice is the manifestation of subjectivity, and story harnesses this power to relay the positioning of the speaker; a mirror or window for others to see and feel her truth (Royster). Writing our truths as Indigenous women advocates for agency and authority to speak for ourselves. These authors not only reject the historical silencing and erasure within the field of literature but in the several facets of our everyday existence.

The self-representation in these stories brings visibility to distinct and authentic voices. They represent humanity, the multiversity and the beauty of who we are as Indigenous women. Each individual story holds light of its own; a single star, but the chosen stories in this project share a connection to one another. Leanne Simpson's Constellation Theory attests to this unifying theme of resistance. Together, the stories form a constellation, "a micro-communal form of relationality, governance, and creation"; they are guides out of the enclosures of settler colonialism and into Indigeneity (5-6). These stories show us how and where to find ourselves again, how to love ourselves, to see our power, and to, unapologetically, define ourselves on our own terms.

The first chapter highlights the common theme of reclaiming identity and power. The stories offer accurate, respectful, and transformative representations of Indigenous women. Each story reframes the labels of Native and Woman to contest the negative perception of Indigenous women that lives within the colonial imagination. As writer Pauline Johnson (Mohawk) states in her 1982 article "A Strong Race Opinion: On the Indian Girl in Modern Fiction": the image of Indigenous women in literature renders our humanity, our distinctiveness, our lives, and voices invisible. Due to the "deplorable fact" that there is only "one of her,"; there is only "one Indian girl" to represent the multidimensional lives of every Indigenous woman across North America. The modern representations do not differ as Laura Tohe (Diné) points to the misogynistic, and racist term "squaw," and the exoticization of the helpless "maiden" character used as an essentializing symbol for Indigenous women. Similar to Daniel Heath Justice's (Cherokee) argument against the single story of Indigenous Deficiency; the "one Indian girl" is a silencing method symbolically and physically felt.

The concerns in Johnson's article still hold today. The authors of these Indigenous Futurisms are testaments to the continuous fight for visibility of Indigenous women in literature and our representation in mainstream society. All the stories in this project portray what Johnson calls "a 'real live' Indian girl" (2). More specifically, self-defining characters created and written by Indigenous women themselves. With the vast representation in this project, the three stories introduced in chapter one strongly supports the re-centering of Indigenous women's presence as real human beings in the here and now, and as heroines of their stories.

"Transitions"; *Future Home of the Living God*; and *Trail of Lighting* focus on redefining colonial gender roles and identity categories. The characters exemplify self-determination and refusal of colonial recognition. They are catalysts of change and mirror the freedom to claim

their own identities on their own terms. As acts of decolonization aimed at the consciousness of the reader to disrupt settler ideologies, these stories empower Indigenous women readers to embrace self-sovereignty and to take pride in the ways we self-identify. Each story resists the idea of Indigenous women as the one "Indian girl" and instead offers authentic representations that honor the distinct identities across North America.

Within the first chapter's analysis, the reconstruction of identity relies on Indigenous recognition. Each personal journey is vital to the overall representation of each character. The rekindling of racial and cultural ties in their stories reasserts their traditional roles as women. The concept of "tradition" and being "traditional" arise in all three stories. In each, the characters address their concern about not being for "tradition" or not being "traditional enough." At many times, their feelings of inadequacy about their 'Indianness' and the repressive forces on their authenticity gave meaningful engagement between colonial and Indigenous recognition. The concern of claiming Indigenous identity in relation to traditionality in these stories is not a coincidence. The idea of 'being real' or 'feeling enough' in order to claim one's identity, especially regarding elements of traditionality, speaks to systemic oppression operating within our own communities. Yet, each author confronts this concern with reiterating the need to dismantle these attitudes if we are to live differently as Indigenous communities. There are several guides within each story helping the characters navigate their reclamation of self and this guide symbolizes the essence of Indigenous wisdom. The main characters embody change in philosophies in what makes them "real" when engaging with Indigenous recognition. They no longer see themselves as invisible as Indigenous beings, nor do they feel inferior in their role as a woman.

The categories of traditional and progressive work together rather than as separate entities in these stories as well. The characters initially detest their connection to traditionality. Helen Hoy

states that common matrifocal definitions of women's roles and responsibility entails "Woman as Center, maintaining the fire. The Keeper of Culture"; she is giver, teacher, transmitter of culture, and community voice and tribal leader (23). The characters in these stories are very much progressive in the ways they live and interact with the world around them. They are modern in every sense of the word because they live in modern worlds. Nevertheless, they exemplify the essence of traditionality as women. The common role Hoy refers to applied in a modern context for each character is how they assert their power in their identity as Indigenous and as women. These stories aim to decolonize the confining ideologies placed upon our bodies, minds and spirits. They communicate the freedom that lies within defining who we are. There are "real live Indian girls" in Benaway, Erdrich, and Roanhorse's stories; they are Johnson's vision come true. The second chapter unveils characters as doorways into the author's perspectives to magnify their subjectivity through catharsis and introspection. These characters provide intimate understandings of their realities and look deeper into the conditions Indigenous women face in our everyday existence and the internal response to feeling invisible.

The authors of these stories use their characters to translate the internalized feelings of settler colonialism. From a resistance standpoint, they combat these feelings from finding a sense of belonging through blood memories, which evokes an internal-recognition response as a form of attaining visibility and healing. The introspection of our lives reminds us of the power in speaking our truths. To speak for ourselves, to inform each other, and to inform the following generations. Our truths are felt experiences, as Dian Million's Felt Theory explains, they are valuable knowledges "to counter and intervene in a constantly morphing colonial system" (70).

The emphasis of commonalities and differences bring these selections of stories together in chapter two. Devon Mihesuah's (Cherokee) article "Commonality of Difference: American

Indian Women and History” argues that there is no such thing as a monolithic, essential Indian woman (2). Due to the cultural disparities between tribes, such as religion, social systems and economies Indigenous women react to common experiences of adversity and change in dissimilar ways. It is this reaction to common experiences that bridge these stories together and relay the interactives as well as the specificities of Indigenous women's lives and the ways we seek empowerment. “Refugees”; “Né Łe!”; and *The Girl Who Grew a Galaxy* focus on the positive gains out of struggle. Mihesuah states: "few have written about how Indian women have made the best of what colonialism has wrought" (7). These stories do not deny its impact on our experience, but instead, focus on the positive reactions to these conditions and ultimately propose solutions for justice against invisibility.

The felt knowledge in these stories is what makes them real. These stories are not just windows, but bridges "other people might cross, to feel their way into another experience" (Million 76).

The lives and experiences of the authors inform the characters and serve to connect with a broad audience and, more specifically, Indigenous women readers. The subject of belonging emerges in the different experiences of each character. All three stories symbolize the recovery of voice, and the empowerment in finding belonging through blood memories: history, ancestry, home, and heritage. Their connections to blood memories is a powerful act in resisting shame inflicted by settler colonialism. These stories reveal the guiding power of emotional knowledge and the connection through remembering despite their mobilization in the landscape. Each character resists the internal felt experiences of invisibility and find empowerment in their differences.

The third chapter makes known the process of return and the relinking between individual and communal resurgence. The structure of these stories conjoins the main character's perspective with other participating speakers. The meshing of perspectives relays the importance of

relationality and the inclusivity of community connection. The main characters play a central role in igniting resurgence through reconnecting, remembering, and recovering traditional ways of knowing. Leanne Simpson's theory of resurgence is visibly illustrated in these stories:

"Returning is not receding to the past but bringing the strength of our ancestors to bear in the present" (17). These stories convey the process of returning as healing, also known as "returning to ourselves" (Dillon). Returning mirrors, the strength, and endurance of Indigenous knowledge as it exists across time and against settler colonialism. The empowerment in each story is the vitality of women's presence in the act of continuation, the power of community, and the celebration of survival.

Discarding the emotional and psychological baggage carried on from the impact of colonization relies on the recovery of ancestral traditions. The personal transformation of each character in this chapter is a self-reflexive dialogue between the personal, spatial and relational connections through nation-based intelligence. The concept of finding balance on a spiritual level for each character is a transformative experience that acknowledges the humanity in becoming and finding one's original direction. These stories convey the reunion with one's own histories, languages, and cultures to escape the fragmentation caused by settler colonialism. The power of traditional intelligence in these stories are weapons of resistance and methods of healing.

Not only are the characters representing Indigenous presence, but the lessons in each story are bringing visibility to Indigenous embodiment as well. The stories or "survival guides" instruct readers, specifically Indigenous women, to embrace the line of resiliency that we inherit.

Celebrating survival is honoring women's position as knowledge holders to maintain generations of intelligence and traditions. The celebration of survival, according to Linda Smith (Maori), is a

collective sense of life, diversity, and connectedness. Thus, the act of returning asserts the visibility of Indigenous ways of knowing and being that reminds us of our humanity.

The acts of resistance to invisibility in this chapter intensely focus on the trust rebuilt in communication. Each story brings forth elements that carry on the spirit of Indigenous intelligence through dancing, singing, and storytelling. The recurring theme of reconnection is at the heart of every story in this project. However, the mediation brought forth in dance, song, and story are the most significant pieces in rebuilding community relations in “The Eaters”, *Monkey Beach*, and *Celia's Song*. These stories emphasize the need for intimate communication to heal not only as an individual member but as a collective unit. They are mirrors of the stories told within them.

The authors and stories in this project are participating in the act of continuance, passing on the instructions and empowerment to others through written word. They are guides creating a dialogue between writer (storyteller) and reader (listener). The authors are speaking to the reader, asking them to participate in the story as the role of witness. Through the actions illustrated in the stories, characters produce the solutions for justice and encourage the reader to feel, think, and act. These stories are compelling representations of Indigenous women creating better futures. Using the past as a guide for empowering the present with hopes that our original direction is visible for those who follow.

All three chapters attest to the many actions of resistance Indigenous women embody every day to combat the issue of invisibility. The stories in this collection advocate for the power of voice and the power of story. They center Indigenous women's humanity and portray self-representations that serve to empower women readers. They acknowledge the power Indigenous women inherently possess from a legacy of strength, perseverance, and determination that

transcends space and time. The world of Imagined Futurisms created by Indigenous women weave together unique imaginary landscapes that envision a reality of encouragement, healing, respect, and love for each other, and all our relations human and non-human.

As a part of the field of Indigenous Literatures, Indigenous Futurisms are stories of truth. The specific genre of fiction distinctly merges the real and the imaginary because there is no solution without imagination. The stories provide more than representation, they hold the answers to help us navigate the present by acknowledging the past and how we must carry ourselves into the future for the betterment of our peoples. Indigenous women "speak from their hearts, both at home and internationally in circuits of power that presently mediate and produce the conditions for justice" (Million 77). The Indigenous women in these stories and the authors who create them are an international constellation of resistance. As individual creations of light guiding us out of the confines of settler colonialism, together they create a better world.

Indigenous Futurisms are acts of resistance, survival guides, love letters, and reminders of the possibilities of creating better, visible Indigenous futures. As a mixed-blood, urbanized Pueblo woman, growing up, I did not have an Indigenous role model in the public eye to point to, nor did I identify with the misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples in the classroom, on television, or even in the thoughts of my contemporaries. For a time, I could not see myself anywhere in the world, not even in the eyes of my Kawaik nation. I felt invisible, except in the loving embraces of my family. I found my haven in my mother, my aunts and my grandmother, they know this feeling of invisibility as well as I do. They would guide me and remind me, as they still do, of who I am and who we are through story.

The recognition, the visibility, the understanding, and the connection to something much larger than myself is the power they give me. They instruct me to embrace my true self and I find the

same lesson in these Imagined Futures. I do not read these the works in this project as make-believe; I only see their powerful truths. Their felt knowledge honors the visibility of our distinct voices and the way we understand and thrive in the world. Each voice is different from the next, but I can see myself in every single one of these characters- I feel more visible and more empowered than I have ever felt.

Today, we see more positive representations of Indigenous women. Our visibility is changing and improving in our own vision. There are Indigenous women across North America in the frontlines of activism, working in media, in law, in business, in sports; teaching in academia or learning as students in the classroom; practicing science and medicine, creating films, art, writing literature, designing fashion and video games. Even holding positions in places like Congress. Mothers, daughters, sisters, cousins, aunts, and grandmothers. We are a part of a continuing story like the ones written in the pages of these Indigenous Futurisms. These stories, these women, remind us to see our light; as beautiful, powerful, resilient, and diverse embodiments of the sacred Indigenous feminine.

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